THE REUNITING OF Christianity.

F.47 OR 16.15

The Manner how to rejoin all Christians under one sole Confession of Faith.

Written in *French* by a Learned Protestant Divine,

And now Englished by *P. A. Gent.*

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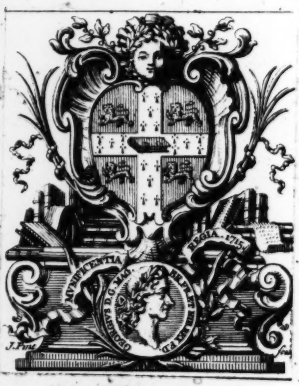

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THE AUTHORS PREFACE.

IF it be a great cause of grief to all true Christians, to see the sacred Religion, which the Son of God brought down from Heaven to the Earth, miserably torn in pieces by so many several Sects, which heretofore have, and who still divide it at this present: If all these different Confessions of Faith, which dismember the spouse of Jesus Christ, do extraordinarily afflict all pious Souls; surely these pious Souls should conceive no less grief at this, that hitherto there has never been any that has undertaken to apply a healing remedy to these wounds, that has attempted,

with ſucceſs, the cure of ſo great an evil, It ſeems no more to be thought of, but as an evil to be deplored, and abſolutely incurable. Every one thinks himſelf ſtraightly bound to ſtick to his old principles and preconceived opinions: every one flatters himſelf in his own thoughts, and believes, that he poſſeſſes the Truth. and is in the right way; after which he looks no more upon others but with ſome kind of averſion; or, at leaſt, with pity, They, in the judgment of him and his party, are as ſo many unfortunate creatures, ready to tumble down an unavoidable precipice: they are conſidered as people that are only fit to be the ſubject of the prayerswhich are offer'd up for miſerable wretches, or of the complaints wch are formed againſt their unhappineſs. Neither are thoſe looked upon who would undertake to remedy this, but as idle Projectors and fantaſtical perſons, like Mountebanks, who promiſe the Cure of thoſe Diſeaſes that are given over by the moſt skilful Phyſicians.

I know very well, that many have ſtudyed to find out a means of according

ſome

some of these Sects, to reunite certain persons together, who have been engag'd in them, and who, on this account, have reciprocally entertained most implacable feuds against each other. There have been divers Writings published for endeavouring an accommodation between the Roman Catholicks & Protestants: they have attempted to reconcile those of the Confession of *Ausburg*, vulgarly stiled Lutherans, with those other called Calvinists; but there have commonly been other interests than those of the Glory of God, intermixed in these enterprises. It has rather been by a principle of Policy than by any motive of Conscience, and desire of the salvation of Souls, that these designs have been set on foot: whence it has happened, that God has turned his Blessing from them, and made the success not to answer the greatness of the design. Some likewise, not aiming at any thing herein more than how they might make ane easier passage, & more plausible revolt, from one Communion to another, have only studied to weaken the foundation of their former opinions, and strengthen

that of their new ones, which they have an intention to embrace. There is also this in it, that men do not ordinarily attempt, but to remedy some effects, without ascending up to the principal cause, and only source of all this evil; just like those ignorant Physicians, who unskilfully labour to cure some of the Symptoms of Diseases, without applying any thing to the grand original Cause, on the curing whereof depends all its consequences.

There was a Preface of a Book, printed some years since, in the Low Countries, which touched this matter, and seemed to aim at a general reconciliation of all Christians, by means of a charitable allowance and and a mutual toleration. But besides that, it was but by the by, that the Author treated upon this important Subject: It seems that, not having ascended up to the spring head of all these Divisions, he has not contrived any proper way, for the Reconciliation which he proposes, nor has rightly distinguished between what is fundamental in Christian Religion and what is

not,

not, to let us ſee, laſt of all, in what things we ſhould have this charity one towards another. And we reject alſo the means which is moſt important towards the attaining to ſo good an end, whilſt we refuſe to diſingage our ſelves from whatſoever may render it unfruitful, as I ſhall ſhew you in its proper place.

It was in the ſearch of this, that I have, for ſome years ſince, applyed my ſelf to ſo diligent and ſerious meditation. I utterly caſt off, at the inſtant, all former opinions of my own, and prejudices againſt others, which might be any obſtacle to me in ſo laudable a deſign: I diſingaged my ſelf for a time of all things whatſoever of any Communion of Chriſtians, which was ſingular, and which ſeparated it ſelf from others: And I believed, that in examining carefully the things wherein they all agreed, I might diſcern with a more diſintereſted eye, that which would be for the common good. I then conſidered with the greateſt exactneſs that I was able, the Nature, Greatneſs, and lamentable Effects,

of

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of

of this miserable Division of Christians. I observed at the same time, how inestimable would all those goods and all those advantages be, which would arise from their reuniting into one & the same Confession of Faith, and reconciliation of their minds into the same Communion. After that, I diligently considered with an intire applying my mind, what could be the causes of so deplorable a misfortune: I have ascended the best I could to the very fountain head of this evil, where, I suppose, I have made some discoveries, which, without question, will be relished by those who shall look upon them without interest. In short I am verily persuaded, that after all my endeavours, nay continual prayers have been heard by the Goodness and Bounty of the *God of Peace*: I hope, that through the Blessing of Heaven, I have met with the true and only remedy of this evil, that is to say, the sole means of reconciling together all those who make profession of Christianity, and who are perswaded, that the Doctrine of the Gospel, which is comprised in the Scriptures

of

of the New Teſtament, is delivered to us from God, and that it contains what we ſhould know, believe and do for our ſalvation. So that as ſoon as we ſhall religiouſly reunite, in thoſe matters which it preſcribes to us, we ſhall be in a ready way of attaining to the mark which it propoſes to us. At leaſt, I may, with truth, ſay, that ſince that very time, I have found, for my own part, a great calmneſs of Spirit. I have not any more, ſince that, looked upon Chriſtian Doctrine, to be difficult, knotty, charged and encumbred with an infinite number of ſubtil queſtions, critical and unprofitable notions. Theſe are the very things, that have made it to paſs unknown, having utterly diſfigured its natural Beauty: This is it, that has given it a face altogether new and ſtrange; and, I dare ſay, that if Saint *Paul* and the reſt of the Apoſtles ſhould deſcend down, this very day, upon the earth, they would not know this Doctrine, ſo diſguiſed as it is. And this ſame alſo is it, that has cauſed theſe miſerable Diviſions among Chriſtians, at this preſent.

I muſt

I must confess, that I, for a great while, had a design, not to publish my thoughts upon this Subject. I would have concealed this advantage, which I had met with, and made it of particular use to my self. It was not for any envy that I bare to the publick good, for which I could be glad to employ all my power and life: But I have always distrusted my own abilities, and knowing, as I do, their utmost, I have ever been suspicious of their productions. Besides this, I did never approve of that liberty which is given of exposing openly all our thoughts to publick view, or to say more properly, all those whimsies which we have conceived in our Studies. It is to do a great prejudice to men of Learning, to steal from them the time which is so dear to them. It is staying them to pick out good from bad Writings, that is, to search for some grains of Gold amongst heaps of Sand. It is to busie the Press about fruitless Works, which ought not to be employed but in the most excellent: It is, lastly, to entertain the ignorance of the vulgar, who are not able to

make

make distinction of Books, and who, many times, being drawn by a specious Title, are afterwards observed to be deeplier engaged in ignorance and error.

Moreover I know that the opinions of the publick are very tenderly to be considered, for every one will ordinarily pass verdict upon other mens Works, according to the sway of their own passions. Whence it often comes to pass, that perverse Judgments are made on the most innocent designs. I fancied, that some would say of me, that I was but in jest, to make sport, that others would imagine, that I acted herein by some of those motives which I had already observed, and condemned; and that many also of those who did not absolutely disapprove of my thought, might say, that it is a thing rather to be desired than hoped for, that the execution is impossible, and that therefore all the attempts would be without success. Neither am I ignorant how curious this age is. That now a days much seasoning is required to the choicest meats; and that if the most excellent subjects be not

accom-

accompanied with a ſtudious and elegant ſtile, they diſcourage the Readers, and are throwu aſide, as merchandiſe not worth looking on. And it will be a hard matter for me, at above ſixty years of age, to contrive a ſtile that ſhall carry with it that air and neatneſs, which ſhall pleaſe the refined Wits of our times. But after all, I thought that I ought not to quit a deſign ſo profitable and ſo important to the publick good, for ſome objections of ſmall conſequence; that the matter ought more to be looked upon than the Form. I conſidered that Diamonds ſhould not be thrown away becauſe they are rough; and that the golden Ore has always its value, although it hath not yet attained to the luſter which the Cruſible gives it, when its pure body ſhall be ſeparated from the droſs and earth which foyl it. The leaſt articulate and weakeſt voices are kindly heard, when employed to adviſe us of our good, and to conduct us out of ſome unſafe courſe. And perchance it may ſo fall out, that ſome or other of the learned men of this age, excited by my weak en-

endeavours may worthily accompliſh; what I have but rudely eſſayed: and thus it often happens, that the unskilful play of ſome indifferent Muſician ſtirrs up thoſe who have a more delicate touch to correct the defects of the former by the excellency of their hands. All theſe conſiderations, after ſundry debates, did induce me to upbraid my ſelf in terms not much unlike the poor Leppers of *Samaria*, 2 *Kings*, *ch.* 7. Theſe wretches having met with great riches and a quantity of proviſions in the Camp, which the *Syrians* had left behind them, blamed themſelves for keeping cloſe to themſelves a good which might relieve the neceſſities of all the inhabitants of their City. I have therefore, at laſt, taken my Pen in hand to communicate to the Publick, the fruit of a Meditation, to which I have applyed my ſelf for a long time.

I have endeavoured in this little work to follow a familiar method accommodated to the humours of all ſorts of people; wherein my principal aim is to make all Chriſtians, even the moſt weak

and

and ignorant, comprehend the nature of that Religion which they profess, by bringing it back to its first principles & fundamental Doctrines: But to attain to this end, it must be represented in its naked dress, by clearing it from whatsover may render it obscure, ridiculous and barbarous. I do strive to make my self understood by all the world and to proportion any thoughts and expressions to the capacity of every one. To which effect I have divided this small Treatise into three principal parts: in the first I shall let you see the Nature, the Extent, and sad Consequences of this lamentable Division, which is among Christians; The greatness of the Evil should make us know how urgent and pressing is the necessity of its remedy. The second will discover the Cause of the Evil, by laying them open even to their very source head. And lastly, the third will set forth the soveraign and infallible remedy which may be employed for the curing and healing this grievous wound.

If I perceive that this work is seriously entertained, and that it shall produce any

good

good fruit, I will bless God for it with all my heart, since it is only his Glory that I propose for the sole object of my design. And I will further beseech him to bestow on me so much health and strength, that I may be able to make this Treatise be followed by two others, which will be of no less importance: one of which shall be concerning the Counsels which Christian Princes and States may take to make this enterprise succeed aright, by preserving their true and lawful interests, and those of private persons. The other shall be to dispose all those who are out of the Pale of Christianity, utterly to cast away from them all those prejudices which blindly retain them in their ancient Religions, and hinder them from seeing the advantages of that which the Eternal Son of God has given us: so that they shall see how nature it self, and reason, does powerfully invite them to submit to the Gospel, by a perfect obedience; and that it is the only means to enjoy a real tranquility of mind, and a solid quiet in Conscience. This will sufficiently serve to

excite Christians (after their reunion shall be procured) to contribute on their parts towards the Salvation of all the inhabitants of the world, with whom they shall entertain any commerce.

And as there is nothing so repugnant to the design which I have in hand as the prejudices wherewith it may be looke upon : for they are these prejudices which have so much fomented and strengthened this Division, and which would also be capable to destroy the fruit that might be hoped for from this project : So I have, on this occasion, endeavoured as much as in me lay, not to give the least hint that should seem to favour any prejudice whatsoever. I have avoided, as a dangerous rock, giving the least suspicion that I am interested for any party ; and content my self, without taxing any one in particular, to blame in general whatsoever hath caused these Divisions, and whatsoever entertains them at present. 'Tis for this reason, that I have not been spurred on to this design by any motive of Vanity, as to acquire the glory of having undertaken an enterprise

prise which never any man proposed before; and likewise to take away all distrusts which my Profession or my Condition might give: For I know well enough, that if the Protestants did believe that this project had been contrived by a Roman Catholick, and especially by a Clergy man of that Religion, they would think partially on it, and that it was already engaged by interest to favour those of their Communion: and on the contrary, if the Roman Catholicks were perswaded, that it was the work of a Protestant, or of a Greek, they would immediately reject it. And, without doubt, the aversion that they have to those whom they pretend are out of the Church, would make them refuse the most saving remedies, because it would be presented them by a suspected hand: it is just as a sick person takes not, but with great fear, any Medicine which is ordered him by a Physician whom he mistrusts. The same might be said of all other Communions, which are found amongst Christians, they look upon one another with so much Jealousie and Suspicion, that only the very

thought that so laudable a design had been laid by a person who was not of their Communion, would be sufficient to make them reject it without any further examination.

But to draw to a conclusion, I doubt not but that some coming to consider the nature of the remedy which I propose, for the cure of this evil, shall esteem it but as a thing easie to conceive: that they will say, this Idea was no more than what any man might have thought on: that it is a project which, at the first, is very specious, and which finds no great difficulties at a slight consideration of it, but which will meet with such as are unconquerable, if any one undertakes to set it on foot. But besides the great advantage it is to have a means of fancying such an Idea as is accompanyed by that of peace and concord, the only names of which are capable of exciting an abundance of joy in the hearts of all men; I hope so to unmask this design, and discover such a face, that all shall understand the foundation, the possibility and great advantage thereof. For I pretend not

to

to put an end to this great work, without answering to the principal objections, which may be made against it. And I do promise (as I have said before) another Treatise, wherein, in case this shall be favourably received, I will propose a means how to make this project succeed: I shall let you see how the power and authority of those must be employed, who are in a capacity of working successfully in it. And I beseech God to send down his blessing hereupon, and guide all to his Glory, to the good of his Church, and to the comfort of all those good Souls, who shall sigh after so holy a Reunion.

ET nunc miror maxime, & usque antehac miratus sum, eo plerosque Christianos esse ingenio, ut inter se concordiam colere non possint: quod mihi in monstri loco esse videtur. Cum enim eam religionem sectentur, qua nihil unquam fuit, nec unquam erit, aut sanctius, aut simplicius, aut ad humanitatem accommodatum magis, illi tamen inter se ita vivunt, ut tigres, ursos, pantheras, leonesque, ac rabiosos canes in unam caveam conclusos dicas. Hincque adeo factum, ut jamdiu mihi sit persuasissimum,

qui

qui ita ſunt, eos nihil minus eſſe quam Chriſtianos, etiamſi tales ſe haberi poſtulent. Neque enim internecinis odiis, turpiſſimis opprobriis, ac atrociſſimis calumniis, ferro deniq; ac flammis, ut fit, alii adverſus alios graſſarentur, & amorem Dei, ac proximi charitatem violarent: queis ſublatis nihil aliud fuerit Chriſtianiſmus quam nomen inane, & vana aliqua ſpecies, quæ contemplantis otium oblectet. Id apud me cum nuper, ut ſæpe alias, non ſine graviſſima indignatione dolorem, optato allatus iſt hic libellus ſine omni ſcriptoris nomine; in quo tantam utilitatem reperi, ut, ſi

quod tam diuturno ac pene immedicabili malo adhiberi remedium possit, id illius ope eventurum esse arbitrer. Eum certe ita probavi, ut repentino mentis instinctu percussus, meum de illo judicium his versibus inclusérim, non sine votis, ut te, Lector, Christianum esse bona fide ostendas. Et fiet, spero. ubi scriptoris mentem & consilium pernoveris.

Marc. IX.

Ἔστι δὲ ἑαυτοῖς ἅλας, καὶ εἰρηνεύετε ἐν ἀλλήλοις.

Descende summis,
Pax alma, polis,
Celeresque per æthera purum
Extende pennas,
Frondenti nitidum caput
Impediens olivâ.
Jam satis, O nimium satis,
Te juga Olympi,
Et longa exilia,
Et diræ scelerum facies, ac tristia bella
Aversam tenuere.
Aude itaque oblitas nunc, Diva, revisere terras,
Christiadumque genus genus irritabile, placa.
Concordes illis mittens per pectora sensus.
Læta redi, Virgo, tecum unà Astræa redibit,
Melliaque inter se traducent otia gentes
Diffidiis odiisque procul. Te turba Acherontis,
Te bellona tremet venientem, & magnus easdem
Sub te, sacra canens, Orbis venerabitur aras.
Eia age, jam cernes divulsa abreptaq; membra,

Et

Et corpus lacerum in sedes rediisse priores:
Denique jam Christo redivivum reddere Christum,
Et secura potes: Nam lato limite fertur
Hic liber, aversosque animos tibi, Sancta, reducit,
Per populos jam jura dabis; Te quisque canemus,
Et tua tam densis stabunt altaria donis,
Ut te rellicti teneant oblivia Cœli,
Et dubites posthac cum secula lata videbis,
Sideribus Terra præstent, an sidera Terris.

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The

THE REUNITING OF CHRISTIANITY.

The First Part.

Of the Division which is among Christians, and of its Consequencies.

CHAP. I.

Of the Nature and Greatness of this Division.

WHen St. *Paul* said, *That it was necessary there should be Heresies amongst us, to the end that such as are*

approved might be made manifest. His words must not be taken, as if he would by an extravagant Paradox Authorize the diversity of Opinions in Christianity. For his design was never to favour the Authors of Sects and Heads of Parties, by imposing silence to those who would remedy Divisions, and put a stop to their sad consequencies. But he declares plainly, what we must expect from the ill disposition of the spirits of Men, from the high esteem which they have of their own sufficiency, and from their inclination to render themselves considerable, by some singular Opinions in matters of Religion. He designs by the same means to make us see how the providence of God, which draws good out of evil, and light out of the thickest darkness, takes occasion from thence, to distinguish such as appertain to him: making appear by this con-

tra-

tradiction of sinners, the constancy of the Servants of God, and their generous resistance to all sorts of temptations and tryals. It is in this sence also, that *Jesus Christ* declares to us the necessity of scandals and tribulations arising *in the Church*; and that he is come to kindle the Fire-brand of War in the World, and to put Divisions in States and Families, for otherwise the Gospel, which is the Ministry of Grace, and a Word of Reconciliation and Peace, does not of it self propose any thing, but union, amity and concord. Nature, although sprung from the same Original with Grace, hath inclinations quite distinct: It is not pleased, but in diversity, and seems not to subsist but by the contrariety of qualities, which occur in its works; whereas Grace is not preserved, but by the entire correspondence of those who have a share therein, and by the con-

formity of their Opinions. We cannot divide our ſelves in its Principles without deſtroying it to us. For ſuch a ſeparation is to give it ſuch grievous wounds, as will force it to retire from thoſe who are not more careful to improve it by ſuch wayes as are moſt ſuitable to its nature.

Now, is it not a moſt deplorable thing, that an occaſion ſhould be taken of making uſe of a Doctrine of Peace, for the miſerable tearing in pieces a Body, whoſe Members ought to be perfectly united? Is it not a ſhameful thing that this unhappy *Pro* and *Con* ſhould be introduced to make the ſame havock in the *Church* which it ordinarily makes in the World? Philoſophy never ſaw ſo many Sects: *Paganiſme* ſo many different Devotions. *Mahometiſme* ſo many contradictory Opinions concerning their *Alcoran*, as we have Sects, Hereſies and Schiſmes in Chriſtiani-

ſtianity, about the underſtanding of its fundamental Law, which is the Goſpel. As ſoon as the ſprouts of this Holy Seed began to appear upon the face of the Earth, we ſaw at the ſame time an infinite number of unprofitable and choaking Tares ſpring up, ſufficient to deſtroy that in its birth, which would bring with it Salvation and Life. Almoſt in the ſight of the Holy Apoſtles, (thoſe Sacred Confidents of our Soveraign Maſter) there aroſe ſuch as vaunting themſelves to have embraced his Doctrine, would have repreſented him after their fancies, and ſet him forth as their own whimſies and caprichioes ſuggeſted to them. And preſently afterwards would make their particular Sentiments paſs for general and infallible Rules, and have pretended that all others were obliged to ſubmit themſelves thereto. Thus the Blood of *Jeſus Chriſt*, which

still reeking, should warm the hearts of Christians, with a Holy Charity, as well as with an Ardent Zeal, could not choak the Seeds of these miserable Divisions. Insomuch that in the Third Age, St. *Epiphanius* numbers up Four-score several Heresies, (or rather different Opinions) which had crept in amongst the Christians, and yet not mentioning the divers Branches into which these Heresies were sub divided. There is scarcely any one Article of Faith, or any speculation of Christianity, whereon strange Opinions have not been advanced, which in time have made Sects, and different Religions. And we know that every particular Combination has appropriated to it self the Name of a Church, and boasted to be the Spouse of the Son of God, to the utter exclusion of all others. They have also gone further, for besides the Heavenly Doctrine contain-

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ed in the Gospel, where they have taken occasion of raising disputes; They have forged such as have been meerly humane, concerning which there hath also been miserable Divisions. And as though these Men had climbed up to Heaven to consult the very Mouth of God himself, they have Preached up their Doctrines as Oracles, and Fundamental Truths. After which they have had no great trouble to engage their Followers to suffer the most cruel Torments, and even Death it self in defence of their Opinion, and after that have confidently enrolled them in their own Legend, as Martyrs of Jesus Christ, though they suffered only to advance the glory and reputation of some Arch-Heretique. So God to chastize the rashness and confound the vanity of their thoughts, has permitted, that Division should ruine their work, as heretofore it defeated the

insolent designs of those who would erect the Tower of *Babel*.

After that we have once forsaken the Royal Road, which God has prescribed us, we run into all by paths, and separate our selves one from another, each of us fancying to be in the most commodious and safest way. Can you likewise believe that a separation is sometimes made about Subjects, not only light and trivial, but in some sort ridiculous, and which do redound to the shame of those who made them serviceable to the ends of their Schisme and Division? What contentions have there not been among Christians, namely, on what Day the Celebration of *Easter* should be observed; If, in the Communion, Bread leavened or unleavened should be made use of; If the Body of Jesus Christ was corruptible after its conception, or not; If we may say that one of the Trinity

nity was Crucified : If the Church can condemn, and excommunicate one that is dead. If the Hallelujah might be Sung in *Lent*, and other Questions of the like nature? Behold here what are ordinarily the subjects, which cause these most real calamities. Behold that which separates those; who with one consent should advance the glory of their common Master.

But to come to our times, and more neerly to touch upon the evil which troubles us at present, and which has given me occasion of laying open my sence, to contribute to a Remedy: Is it not a lamentable thing, and of sad Example, to see Christians so miserably divided, as they are at this Day? For, to let pass the divers Sects of Christians, which are in the East, and who have more cause to grieve for their lamentable Divisions, than for their miser-

miſerable ſtate, under the rigorous Yoke of the *Mahometans*; ſuch are the Greeks of *Armenia* and *Circaſſia*, the *Neſtorians*, *Jacobites*, *Maronites*, *Cophtes*, Chriſtians of St. *Thomas*, &c. People who are looked upon as Hereticks or Schiſmaticks, and who believe that out of their particular communion, there is no Salvation to be expected; Let us inſiſt only upon this deplorable condition of the Chriſtians of Europe in theſe Countreys wherein we live. There is no heart ſo hard that does not ſigh to behold ſo ſtrange a diſ-union; There is no truly Chriſtian Soul, that does not grieve to ſee the effects of the implacable ſudes and hatreds, which are amongſt thoſe who are looked upon as Brethren; *Since* they are thereby expoſed to the continual inſolencies of the ſworn Enemies of Chriſtianity.

Since this great breach which is made

made in the Western Church, by the separation of the Protestants, from the Communion of the Church of *Rome*; what Bloody Wars! How many Murders and Massacres! What changes and subversions is in States! has there not been seen, insomuch that they have not stuck to have recourse to the common Enemy to draw in succour against those, with whom they should have entertain'd a true Brotherly affection? And that which is most deplorable is, that this division hath been followed by an infinite company of others, and as a fruitful Mother hath produced an incredible number of Monsters, which resemble it. These two great Branches growing out one from the other, have also sprouting out of them, a vast company of lesser Branches, which although not equal in strength, bring forth fruits altogether as dangerous as their Mother.

ther. Among Proteſtants, how many ſeveral Sects in *Germany*, in *England*, in *France*, in the Low-Countreys, *&c.*? There needs but ſome diverſity in the habits of Preachers, ſome difference in the Ceremonies, or in the Ornaments of Churches, or of the Government thereof, to form a Sect. A ſimple diſſenting in the Liberty which every one gives himſelf of expounding according to his Fancy, the miſteries which are above his reach, is ſufficient to cauſe a ſeparation. The manner of explaining the ſubject of Predeſtination, and of Reconciling God's Grace with the Motions of the Will of Man, makes us look upon thoſe who are of a different Opinion, as ſuch People as are in the high-way of Damnation, and with whom we muſt not entertain any Communion.

Nor may they who have lived in Communion with the Church of

Rome

Rome insult at this Division of the Protestants, and pretend that union and concord have continued amongst them without any division; For although they all submit themselves in appearance to the Authority of one only Head, and that they look upon him as the Center, wherein all the Lines of their Society do meet and are reunited, nevertheless we are not ignorant, how great the number of their dissentions are, and how little the union is amongst their Doctors. So that if the fear of a Superior Authority seems to retain them in one and the same Society, their hatreds are but the more fermented within. They do not less condemn one another of Heresie, and of being out of the way of Salvation. And the Examples of our Age have shown us, that when oppertunities have been presented, of making their aversions appear, how far they have carried it, being

being always desirous that their particular Opinions might prevail over all others. Therefore it is not any particular interest that I here endeavour to advance; But, it is the general interest of all Christian Societies; It is the good and the union of all those who march under the Standard of the Cross. I design to reunite together all the Christians of the East and West, *Greeks* and *Romans*, Catholicks and Protestants, and all the divers Branches wherein into these latter are subdivided.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The first Effect of this Division.

Disquiet of Mind and Trouble of Conscience.

WEre there no other Evil in this Division, than the very Division it self, and that deformity which it causes in Christian Societies; Were there no other harm done by it, than the disfiguring the Face of Christianity, and the blemishing its beauty that renders it so considerable, it would be so great a cause of grief, as to oblige us to endeavour, with all our power, to remedy so great a mischief. But besides all this, this unhappy Division is very fruitful, and produces infinite evils,

evils, as much or more pernicious than it ſelf. 'Tis like the Viper, which by a ſtrange ſelf-dilaceration, makes a great Number of little Serpents come out of her, which inſtantly make their Teeth and Venom appear. There are ſome who ſet upon particular Perſons, and others who cauſe great diſorders in Societies, both ſecular and Eccleſiaſtical, as I undertake to make evident, to every one.

The firſt effect of this Diviſion, is diſquiet and torment of mind, wherein they ordinarily do plunge themſelves, who are engaged in this Laberinth of divers Opinions, about matters of Religion; And *theſe* Opinions do in time forme the different Sects and Societies which divide all Chriſtians. A Traveller Journeys with pleaſure, ſo long as his way ſeems good and plain, and that he is aſſured it is the right, that it lies direct,

rect, and finds it is not divided into other different Paths; But so soon as he perceives himself in a cross Road, where he meets with several tracks, without knowing which of them he should make choice of; 'Tis impossible, but that being in this suspence, he must have a great unquietness and grief of spirit. If all Christians perfectly agreed in Opinion, that Agreement would be a grand means wherby we might advance with pleasure towards our happiness; But meeting with this great diversity of sentiments and professions, wherein every one boasts of possessing the truth, as by birth-right to the exclusion of all others; we must needs be involved in great perplexity. For to think that we can easily solve doubts, by a careful and serious applying of our minds to meditation, and by the force of *reasoning and discourse, is a Fallacy*, for besides that every one

hath cause of distrusting himself amidst this great diversity of Opinions; Seeing that the clearest Wits, the most profound Doctors, *Men of the choicest Endowments*, and such as have the greatest Piety, sweetness & Moderation of Temper, are oftentimes observ'd to be separated and divided, the one from the other; I am assured that many oft times in these applications, how zealous soever, nay even after the most fervent Prayers, be overswayed by the probability of the Arguments, which every Opinion hath produced in its own favour. And I durst say that when one has so soon determin'd in this scrutiny, there may be some reason to suspect so quick a resolution: I am apt to fear that this may often respect other interests, than those of the glory of God, and our Salvation, which could so quickly make us bend to them. It many times happens that

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our Education, our Customes, our particular advantages, and such other considerations, do easily turn the Scales. And that indeed which abuseth us herein, is, that these are slipt in so dexterously, and mixed in such a manner in these disputations, that we cannot discover them, but by strong and frequent reflections.

But let us put the case, that a Man who has an extraordinary light, by the knowledge of Tongues, and reading of Good Books, may wade through these difficulties, and sowe his doubts among these perplexities; What shall we say of so many common Persons, who have not had, nor ever been in a Condition to have, all these so profitable helps, I mean, so necessary for the penetrating into these profound misteries, and carrying them through that Labyrinth? Is it because that Christian Religion is not propos'd, but only to the lear-

ned? Is it not as well addressed to the Ignorant, to Women, to Children, and to the poor unlearned Pesants? Must we not rather say, that it is towards such that it turns the most Favourable Aspect? That whilst the Doctors are disputing with great earnestness together, about the Mysteries of the Kingdome of Heaven, the most simple do forcibly take it by the ardour of their Zeal. Therefore what can we point out more contrary to the Peace and Consolation of these good and simple Souls, than this great diversity of Opinions, of Sects, and of Religions?

But, if it should be objected, that for want of reading and necessary study to search, into the most sublime mysteries of Religion, these ordinary People would be content with what is most plain and most clear in Christian Doctrine, which will

will ſuffice to inſpire them with the Love of Virtue, and the fear of God; and that will be capable to give them peace of Conſcience, and all inward Conſolation, that is neceſſary for them. I ſhall readily anſwer that this is all I demand, and to which I endeavour to reduce all Chriſtians in general. The Chriſtian Religion is equally propoſed to all, and in the diſtribution of its Graces, it makes no diſtinction between the Learned and the Ignorant: The High-towering Wit, and that which creeps among the Vulgar: As the Remedies and Medicines which Nature offers us, work in the ſame manner upon Perſons of all conditions and degrees. So that to be a Man, ſuffices to qualify us for laying claim to the advantages which Grace preſents to Us in the Doctrin of the Goſpel, and to lay hold of the Aids which it gives us,

to make Us partakers of it.

But ſhould it be likewiſe objected for the clearing this difficult Point, that thoſe who have not the means and advantage of penetrating into theſe ſecrets, by a deep meditation, may conſult the Learned to reſolve them, in the choice which they ſhould make of a good and ſure Opinion; Who does not ſee, in the firſt place, that it is not the way to draw them out of the trouble, wherein they are, ſeeing they do not addreſs themſelves, but to Men who are not infallible, and who may be prepoſſeſſed with prejudices, and have their particular Intereſts, ſo that they ſhall be always in doubt, whither or no the advice which was given them, proceeded not from ſome other Principle than the Glory of God, the Charity, and deſire of promoting the Salvation of Souls. Moreover, ſhould this addreſs be made

made to ſome of thoſe Doctors who follow different Opinions, upon colour: they are obliged to examine all things, and retain what is beſt: Every one will alledg in his own favour, all the moſt plauſible Reaſons and Conſiderations which he can, and many times thoſe that are leaſt valid, are moſt ſpecious. After this can a Man of mean parts, find out in himſelf light enough, and diſcerning to carry him through thoſe difficulties, which make a ſeparation amongſt Men of far greater parts, and more refined Judgements than his Own.

But laſt of all, what ſhall we ſay of the poor Labourer or ſimple Tradeſman, who has ever been bred in a Countrey, where ſome one of theſe Sects prevails? We know that ſuch a Sect forces thoſe of the Country, perfectly to acquieſce in it. That it requires every one to ſubmit, with-

out any contradiction to all that it shall prescribe: That there are some Sects, who suffer not their Followers to enter into any discussion of what they lay down to follow, and compel them to a blind obedience. As for Example, what can a poor Soul do, who has been born in the midst of *Italy* or *Spain*, where Reigns a most severe Inquisition, or in the farthest parts of *Denmark*, or *Swedeland*, where are none but Protestants, when he shall learn that there are other People elsewhere in great numbers, who are called Christians, boasting themselves to have Truth in its greatest Purity, and doom all to Eternal Torments who are not of their Opinion? Is it not certain that a poor Wretch in this condition, not being able to have any commerce nor conference with those of whom he hath been told this, will have so much more trouble in his Mind,

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by how much his passion is greater that stirs up in him a desire of his own happiness? Which makes us see the necessity of bringing together all Christians under one common Principle: And this Principle must contain Maximes, easie, intelligible and indisputable. In a word, this Principle must be such, that it may produce Peace and Inward comfort, and guide all the Faithful, by the Practice of Holiness, to the enjoyment of an Immortal Crown.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Second Effect of this Division.

That it destroys the study of Holiness, and especially the practice of Charity.

THe Principal design of the Gospel, and I dare say the only one, is to bring Men by the knowledg of its Misteries, to the study of Virtue, and to conduct them by the practice of this Virtue, to the enjoyment of Happiness and Glory. So thar we may say, that the sacred Chain of our Salvation hath three Links, to wit, the knowledg of truths, the practice of virtues, and the possession of Happiness. And if this Salvation be compared to a Building; The Revelations of the Gospel, may

may be ſaid to be the Foundation and Baſis of it, Celeſtial Glory is the covering, and Virtue that which joyns theſe two extremes together, making us paſs from the knowledg, to the poſſeſſion of the Object known; where all our Felicity reſides. So that whatever gives any impediment to this knowledge, the ſame obſtructs the progreſs of Virtue, and ſtaggers the hope of Felicity. The firſt receives no blow, whereof the two others feel not the Impreſſion. And this is ſeen in theſe Lamentable Diviſions, which not only caſt us into diſquiet, as hath been ſaid, but alſo in diſturbing Mens knowledg, they hinder Holineſs, and pervert the practice of Chriſtian Virtues. The principal part wherof, conſiſts in the Piety and Zeal, which we bring to the ſervice of *God*. And the principal exerciſe of Piety conſiſts in the Sacred Commerce, which

which the Faithful entertain with their God, by Prayer. So that whatsoever troubles our Prayer, the same brings a notable prejudice to a life of Holiness. If then, as St. *Peter* teaches us [1 *Pet*.3.7.] the idle domestick contentions, which arise from the want of Unity between Husband and Wife, are capable to interrupt our Prayers, and blast the fruit of this saving exercise? What shall we say then of the Contentions which divide the Christian Church, into so many different Societies? How can we expect that our Christian vows should unite together to ascend more readily to our common Father, whilst our Opinions, and consequently our Inclinations remain so contrary?

One of the principal means required for our right observing of Holiness, is the repose and tranquility of the Soul: Sweetness also and modera-

moderation are necessary; which make us look upon things without any prejudice, and the engagement of particular Interests. If then (as we have plainly shewed) this Division throws us into such disquietness and trouble, every one may judg how prejudicial it is to the notions of true Piety. Is it not certain, that if we would employ in the study of Piety, and good Works, the time which we allow our selves, for the examining of all those Questions, which divide us; We should quickly make great progress in the way which leads to Eternal Life? The Emperor *Antoninus* exhorted those who were desirous to advance in the practice of Moral Virtues, to desist from the reading of Books, chiefly such as treated of Philosophy, as being only a hinderance to their design. If, said he, any should perswade thee to read, do thou immediately answer,

answer, I have no time, to busy my head about these things; I have a greater and more important affair in hand, which requires a Man's whole attendance. My business is to tame my passions, and to make my self every day a more virtuous Man, and to discharge my principal duties. May we not in like manner say, to these curious Wits, who give up themselves intirely to such thorny questions? This is not that wherunto ye were called, Leave off all these contentions; You lose the most precious thing in the World, which is your time. Rather study to become a true Christian, that is, to be humble, fearing God, loving your Neighbour, preserving your Body in purity, avoiding evil, and continually endeavouring to edifie those with whom you converse.

If Holiness be no other thing than a precious Crown, composed of all Christian

Christian and Moral Virtues, I believe there is none but will grant me that the fairest flower of that Crown is Charity towards our Neighbour, which St. *Paul* calls the bond of perfection, *Col.* 3. Now this Virtue consists in loving our Neighbour, as our self; Considering that he bears the Characters of the Image of God; That we enter both one and the other into the Communion of the same Society, and that we are called to be made partakers together of one and the same Inheritance. This admirable Virtue is so excellent, that some, with good reason, call it the Soul of Religion, the Fountain of all other Virtues, or to speak more properly, Virtue it self, which takes divers Names, according to the diversity of the Subjects whereon it is exercised. It is called Piety, when it looks up towards Heaven, to pay Homage to its Soveraign, we call it

Charity,

Charity, when enclining towards the Earth, it ſtudies to do good to its Fellow-ſervants; In a word, it receives the Names of other Virtues, as of Temperance, of Modeſty, of Humility, *&c.* when it is reflected back upon its ſelf, by the Motions of that Legitimate Love, which it bears it ſelf. Therefore if this Monſter of Diviſion, be capable to deſtroy Charity, which eſtabliſhes the Eſſence of Holineſs; It is manifeſt, that nothing can be conceived more prejudicial to Virtue, than the diſ union and alienation of Mens minds. And as Charity propoſes nothing but Peace, Union, and Concord, For its aim is ſtraitly to tye the knots of a holy amity: There can nothing be ſo diametrically oppoſite to it, as Diviſion, which cutting all theſe knots, and breaking theſe ſacred Bonds, does divide all that which ſhould be moſt united.

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To confirm this truth; Let us make a parallel of the effects of this Charity, which St. *Paul* thus reckons up, 1 *Cor.* 13. with those which division produces. Charity is of a patient spirit, division is turbulent and unquiet: Charity is kind and bountiful, Division only spreads hatred and malice; Charity is not envious, but envy raigns particularly in division, where each party respects the obligation of their proper Interests; Charity is not insolent, nor puffed up with Glory, whereas Division is fierce, proud, and insupportable; It inspires those who possess it with a desire to abase and oppress others, if it be possible, that they may raise up themselves, and Rule without Competitor; Charity seeks not its own ends, is not dispiteful, and thinks no evil. These ill qualities are the true Characters of Division, in which it hath no other end, than the ad-

vancement of its own party, to the detriment of all others. Charity rejoyces not in injustice, but altogether in the truth: Division oppresses the truth, and is never pleased, but with unrighteousness, and violence. Charity endures, believes, hopes and bears all things. Division causes suspicions and jealousies to arise, gives ill interpretations to actions, and even to the most innocent words, and drives us into passion and impatience, into murmuring and extravagances. And to draw the last Line to this parallel, God grant that as Charity never fails, but is maintained in the very ruine of all that which is most Glorious, and most firm in Society: so on the other side, by the rule of contraries, that we may quickly see this unhappy Division utterly decay and cease, by a perfect uniting of all Christians.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

The Third Effect of this Division.

That it makes Men Irreligious, and causes Atheisme.

IN all Divisions, which tear in pieces Kingdomes and Monarchies, each side at the first does boast by their Manifestoes and Declarations, that they took not up Armes, but for the Publick Good, and for maintaining the Crown and Authority of the Prince; And although those Parties be so contrary, and averse, that their Swords are drawn, and in a readiness to decide their quarrel, yet both of them have the confidence to alledge in their Vindication, the Justice of their cause,

and interest of their Soveraign; whilst in the end, all tend to the utter subversion of the State, and total change of the Government. And it will many times happen, in these contests, that the most mutinous and most sedicious, do make themselves Masters of Soveraign Authority. So is it ordinarily seen, that in the division of Opinions in Religion, every one protests, that no other Argument or Interest perswades him to follow the Religion that he embraces, but the real love of truth, and desire of his Salvation: All those who would be the promoters and spreaders of some new Opinion, show an extraordinary Devotion and Zeal at the beginning; But by little and little all that degenerates, and all the overtures which Division makes, serve but as so many doors, by which at last, Impiety, Irreligion, and Atheisme do slip in. 'Tis amidst these

these differences that we commonly see some new Religion thrust in it self among us, which differs but very little from the disclaiming of all Religion. Just so was it by means of the divers Sects, which heretofore sprang up in the Church, that the Doctrin of *Mahomet* has taken such footing in the World; Every one knows how wide the Division of the Eastern and Western Churches was at that time. And I do not believe but that the great diversity of Judgments, and Religions, which we see at present in Christianity, hath been the cause of this coldness and want of Devotion amongst us, in what we call *Christian Society*. Insomuch that Piety and Religion seem only to be left in full Authority amongst Women, and the Vulgar.

This Evil arises from hence, that the greatest part of Men either cannot, or will not give themselves the

trouble of ſearching into theſe different Opinions, to determine which they might cloſe with; ſo they chooſe rather to believe nothing abſolutely, than to be always in ſuſpence about what they ought to believe. As the great diverſity of Medicines, which are preſcribed to a Patient, do very often make him refuſe all, thinking it better to reſign up all to venture at once, rather than ſtand ſo long about making his choice of the Remedies which are propoſed to him. Some go towards it, but with ſuch a kind of negligence and natural ſloath, that makes them apprehend a great deal of trouble in it: And theſe eſteem it better to ſuſpend all manner of action, than undertake any thing, that requires ſo much care and intenſneſs of thought concerning it. Theſe are like lazy Souldiers, who ſuffer themſelves to be kill'd, rather than they'l courageouſly

ously take up their Armes, and stand to their own defence: Or those who, out of a desperate Fury thrust a Dagger into their own Breasts, for fear, least their Enemy is pressing upon them to do it.

There are others who dare not venture upon this tryal, through the distrust which they have of themselves, and of their own power; They do not feel themselves strong enough to sustain such a weight, nor able to break through all those difficulties which they meet with. This obliges some, blindly to follow the first that is presented them, and suffer themselves to be led by those, who pretend to have skill herein; Supposing they are in a good condition, if they put themselves under the conduct of their Leaders: And others stand Newters, not daring to adhear to any Party, out of a Distrust which they have, of all such as offer them-

ſelves to them; And this it is, that cauſes Irreligion and Atheiſme. Yet are there ſome, whoſe Fault is not neglect of examining theſe different Queſtions, but the true Reaſon of it is, becauſe they are not indeed capable of it. Such are all Peſants and Mechanicks, and others, who know nothing more, than what belongs to their Employments, and who, being taken out of that, are as if they were in an unknown Country, where they are ignorant both of the wayes and Language: It puts them to a ſtand, as though they had neither ſenſe nor Motion; They make all their Devotion, and all the Service which they ſhould pay to God, to conſiſt in the well obſerving theſe outward actions of Religion, in which they have been trained up. Witneſs the poor Chriſtians of *Muſcovia*, all whoſe Religion is no more than juſt a ſhowing to thoſe who deſire to be infor-

informed of their belief, the Image of ſome Saint, which they carry about with them: And others alſo, who think that if they know but how to make the ſign of the Croſs aright, may paſs for very good Chriſtians. Therefore, if, inſtead of puzelling our ſelves about ſo many queſtions, and controverſies, we would ſtudy to bring back the Chriſtian Doctrin, to its true Principles, which are but few in number, and eaſy for all ſorts of Perſons to comprehend, it would be the ready way to make true Chriſtians, who would know what is really eſſential in their Doctrine, and ſo would quickly be brought to a true piety, and to the fear of God, which is the only deſign of Chriſtian Religion.

Here it may alſo be added, that this great diverſity of Opinions, begets a ſtrange prejudice in certain Spirits: For there are many who

who would make us believe, that truth is so evident and perceivable, by all where it is reveal'd, that it shines as the Sun, which dims the light of all the other Stars. Wherefore they conclude, that if Christian Religion contains those saving truths that came from God, were brought down from Heaven to Earth, and attended with Glory and Miracles, it would immediately obscure with its splendour all seeming truths, which strive to have a counterfeit Luster to resemble it. When therefore they see that every one of these different Opinions upholds it self by such probable Reasons, that many are staggered at the consideration of them: They cannot be perswaded that this Gold is to be found in the Earth, because it does not immediately discover them its glistering light. And as they cannot conceive that it is fit for them to remain one moment

moment in suspence of separating truth from falshood and errour, they forsake both one and the other, to secure themselves from the danger of being forced to a new change, those Persons would certainly refuse to take a Sum of Money, if offered them, out of a distrust, that they should not know the Coines, and that they should not discern false Money from good; whence we may judge, how great the prejudice is, which this Division brings to Mens Salvation. An unhappy design, that under the pretence of an exact search for the truth, destroys the principal effect of Christian Religion, which is the Salvation and comfort of Souls!

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Fourth Effect of Division.

That it keeps back all those who are without, and breeds in them a dislike of Christian Religion.

THe preaching of the Gospel, being as it were a publick Proclamation, to invite Men to list themselves under the Ensigns of *Jesus Christ*: It is undeniable, that whatsoever obstructs this Holy Summons is contrary to the intent and purpose of the Gospel, and troubles the establishment of the Eternal Raign of the Son of God; And this same is one of the principal effects of the Division of Christians. Those who are without the bounds of Christianity,

anity, as *Turks*, *Jews*, and *Pagans*, may justly reproach us, with the want of a true understanding amongst our selves. Resolve how to settle (will they say) your different Opinions, before you go about to perswade us to follow you. First unite your selves together, and then we will consider whether or no we shall unite with you. And since unity and verity are inseparable; How, in this great difference of your Opinions, shall we be assured that you will propound the truth to us? And certainly there can be no greater scandal to our Religion, in the sight of those without, than this deplorable Division. The *Sieur dela Boulaye* [Chap. 18.] In his Voyages to the *Levant*, saith, That the *Turks* perceiving this vitious excess of strife, and multitude of Divisions amongst Christians, have confirmed themselves, by this means in their

own

own way, and think God to be the Author of them. 'Tis by reason of this, that St. *Paul* says, [Rom. 2.] That the Name of God is despised, because of us, among the Gentiles. And yet the bad lives, and extravagances of particular Persons, do not bring so much Prejudice to Christian Religion, as the Dividents of Opinions in its Doctrine. Of the first it may be said, that these are but the faults of certain Persons, whose profession is not answerable to their Religion; That that may be innocent, though they are criminal, who pretend to follow it. But when the evil is in the Opinions; It may be thought that the defect is in the Doctrine it self. So that they have some Reasons to offer their Objections against it, and to suspect the Truth of the whole. Therefore if it be the purity of the Doctrine, rather than the deportment of particular persons,

ſons, that muſt draw us to one communion; without all queſtion, that which reſults from this Doctrine, will make a greater impreſſion upon Mens ſpirits, than that which only regards the manners of ſome few Men.

'Tis generally obſerved that things are not maintained, but by the aide of that which firſt contributed to their production. The ſame influences of the Heavens, which made thoſe Seeds ſprout up, that the Earth has been intruſted with, ſerve likewiſe to raiſe the Plants to their perfections. Therefore ſome ambitious and unſteady brains have taken occaſion by the Diviſion of Chriſtians, to give birth to a Sect, which hath utterly departed from the Fundamental Principles of Chriſtianity; For it was by the means of this Diſunion, that a new Religion hath been formed, and a falſe Prophet ſubſti-

tuted

tuted in the room of the Eternal Son of God, who alone inspired all the true Prophets. It is not to be wondred, such Divisions continuing in the Church, if these poor mis-led Souls remain confirmed in their Opinions. And since that which first alienated them from us, still remains; the aversion which they have to our misteries, remains likewise. So long as the *Roman* Armies were well united, that their Commanders held a perfect understanding amongst themselves, and their Souldiers were kept in a true obedience and submission to their Orders: Other Nations endeavoured to procure their amity with great eagerness; They esteemed it a great Glory to enter into alliance with this People, and many have made no difficulty, to receive their Yoke, to whose Dominion, they thought all others ought to submit: But so soon as misunder-

derstandings happen'd between their Generals and Souldiers, and revolts in the Subjects. Other States despised their Alliance, and took up Armes against them, plainly seeing that they were not invincible, since they were subject to Division. Just so, our disunion makes us an object of the contempt and aversion of all other people. After this, can we think it strange that so many Exhortations, Sermons, and Writings, which have pass'd continually amongst Christians, should make so few Proselites? In the Apostles time, one Sermon alone converted many Thousands of Infidels to the Faith. At the end of St. *Peter*'s Sermon Three Thousand Souls, by Baptism ranged themselvs under the Standard of the Cross. [Act. 2] It was also at this time that all Christians dwelt together with one common accord, and had all but one heart, and one Soul. At

this present we drive back by our Divisions, those whom we invite by our Exhortations. But if it should be objected, that the Church makes now great progress in the *Indies*; I dare say, with pardon for my Opinion, that these poor people have not yet attained to the knowledg of our divisions, and that if they should understand them, their Zeal would quickly wax cold, and all these conquests would be of no long continuance.

When the Protestants first separated from the Communion of the Church of *Rome*, so long as they kept an Uniformity in their Opinions, they made marvellous progress, the Union which was amongst them drew a great part of Europe to their profession: But so soon as they divided themselves into several branches, they have put a stop to their conquests, and had no further thought,

thought, than to maintain themselvs both those whom they have forsaken, and such as have forsaken them.

And it is not only from the ill example of this division, that strangers to the Faith are driven from it: They are led thereunto by the very intrigues and stratagems of the Christians, who are so separated and divided among themselves. Their Division creates such animosity one against the other, that they do their utmost endeavour, to hinder those who have an earnest desire to embrace Christianity, from entring into any other Christian communion but their own. There are others who go further, for they hold it as a true Maxime, That it is better for a *Jew* or *Mahometan*, to persist in his old Errour, than to thrust himself into some of the Christian Societies, which they disapprove. So that as it is impossible for Iron equally

drawn between two Loadſtones, to move either towards the one, or the other. So theſe different ſolicitations which Chriſtians make to draw Infidels to them, leaves them in a neutral ſtate, not knowing which ſide they ſhould take, nor to which they ſhould determine their Judgments.

CHAP

CHAP. VI.

The Fifth Effect of this Division.

Trouble in Church and State.

THe Evil of this Division is not limited only to particular persons; but all Societies, as well Ecclesiastical, as Civil, have too great a feeling of it: For we dayly see strange Tempests happen in both, which had no other cause for the forming of them, than this sad disunion. And has not the Church much reason to complain, that those who are called her Children should tear out her Bowels? That she can expect nothing but death even from those to whom she hath given life? Since they to whom she continually

administers the sacred Milk of her pure Doctrine, and of her wholsome Instructions, do give her so many grievous wounds; as they form Sects in her; In multiplying they dismember Her, and each striving to draw her to their side, at last nothing is seen to remain, but her mangled and broken pieces. And what is more; these deplorable Reliques of the Church, have likewise been so miserably handled, that she is no longer to be known; insomuch that they might rather be taken for the parts of some mishapen Monster, than for the Members of the Divine Spouse of *Jesus Christ*; washed in the Blood of her dear Lord, and clothed with the Sacred Robe of his Righteousness.

But that I may not be thought to aggravate these things, and raise them with an Hyperbole: Let us but consider the present face of the Church;

Church; Is it not true that we ſhall have much ado to meet any one of theſe Societies, (which call themſelves a Church, and attribute the truth ſolely to themſelves,) where theſe ill Characters are not to be ſeen? Firſt, a certain high conceited Opinion of the Principles they have embraced, which creates in them a blind perſwaſion without examining it, and whereof not any ſolid reaſon can be given. Birth, Education, Worldly Intereſts, and other engagements of this nature, together with a kind of negligence, and a fear of being accounted inconſtant, and unſetled, if they ſhould turn to another party; Theſe things, I ſay, have ordinarily a greater influence for the eſtabliſhment of them in their Religion, than Reaſon and Conſcience have: All which is followed by a certain obſtinacy, not to call it ſelf-conceitedneſs, in maintaining their

belief, at any rate whatsoever. There are those who many times do hazard, on this occasion, all that they hold dearest in the World, even to their very lives; which passes in every One of these Societies, for an exquisit Zeal, and an exemplary devotion. Nor is there any one of these Sects, which has not a Catalogue of its Confessors, and that cannot produce its Roll of Martyrs. But how many are there of these Martyrs, who if they had been demanded to give a reason of the Doctrine, for which they made so much constancy appear, would have been gravelled; and have little to answer to the least argument that might have been proposed to them? Many times false Opinions are maintained with as much heat, as the True. Also Illusions and Impostures do make as strong Impression upon our Spirits, as real Objects. Now this obstinacy draws after

ter it an extreme aversion to all other Religions, and even to all other Christian Societies: It either accuses them of blindness, or of stupidity, or of malice. 'Tis nothing else, say they, but fleshly interest, that seems a Foundation of their Doctrine; They reproach them, that their Opinions are altogether destructive to true Piety; that they hurry Men into Superstition and to Idolatry, or else to Libertinisme or Atheisme. And some there are, who are pointed out by others, as if they were frightful Monsters. In a word, any protestation, or any declaration, which they make, that it is the Doctrine they loath, and not the Persons who take it up; That it is the Error they detest, but that they have charity and compassion, for such as are misled, is enough with them: Which yet shall never make me believe, But that the precedent qualities

ties are accompanied with a great Animosity of Spirit, against those who are not of the same Opinion. For how can we sincerely love those, whom we look upon as Enemies to God, and Disciples of Satan, whose Lot and Portion is Hell, where they shall be made a Prey to the Devils? Are there not likewise very dreadful Examples, in what manner they have reciprocally treated one another, in those places where they are mingled together. The weak employ such armes as are most convenient against their Adversaries, which are injuries and reproaches; the powerful straight pass to action; there is no craft nor subtilty, no violence not cruelty, which these People set not a work, utterly to exterminate such as follow a different profession from theirs. The *Roman* Catholick persecutes the Protestant, in those places where he is strongest. The Protestant,

testant, he requites him where he has the Power and Authority in his own hands. And amongst Protestants, those who are of different Opinions, are not treated more favourably. Heretofore the Christians complained much, that the *Pagans* would force them to sacrifice to their Gods, and quit their Religion. [*Tertul. Apolog.* 28.] They grounded not their complaint on any other Reason than this, that Religion, as they affirmed, ought to be an act of a pure and free Mind. But now a days Christians do the same thing towards Christians. We have seen times, where tortures and the cruelest punishments, have been used by Christians, for afflicting other Christians, and for no other cause, but their not being of the same judgments and perswasions. And now after this, who can take it ill that I have no more represented the *Church*,

as

as the Ship which the Son of God conveyeth safe amidst the stormes, wherewith she is continually battered; But to the lamentable wracks of a Vessel, dasht in pieces, not by the rage and fury of contrary Elements, but by the negligence of those within her, and misunderstanding of her Conductors.

This Evil is also very communicative; 'Tis like a Gangrene, which never stays in one place, but corrupts all the neighbouring parts; States, and all Bodies Politique are very sensible of the effects of this Division. We might say of this evil, as of the Leprosie described by *Moses*, that it not only infects Men, but the very Towns and Places where they dwell. I dare affirm, that of Thirty Wars, which have happened in Europe, within these Hundred and fifty years, five and twenty have had the differences of Religion for the occasions

ſions of them, or at leaſt, that they have either been accompanied or followed by ſome Intereſts of Religion. If any would throw the Apple of Diſcord into a Nation, to trouble it, and raiſe civil Wars at home, to the end, that Foreiners might have an opportunity of attacking it; They need but uſe means to cauſe ſome differences to be moved about the Government of the Church; Find ſome fault with the Ornaments of the Altars; Cloath in a different manner thoſe who are to adminiſter Divine Service; or introduce ſome diverſity in the Liturgy, and in the Publique Prayers. This will be ſufficient to diſturb the Peace of a Nation, and abſolutely turn it upſide down. Examples of this are ſo freſh, and ſo dreadful amongſt us, that I need not produce them to confirm what I lay before you. If we would favour the Rebellion of any

Coun-

Country, or back the pretensions of some Usurpers. 'Tis but publishing that the reason why we take up arms in their favour, is to give Liberty to weak and tender Consciences, and to be instrumental, in giving poor distressed Christians a freedom of praying to God Almighty, and to perform all the Exercises of Devotion without constraint. There is nothing impossible to be effected under this specious pretence: There is no manner of excess and violence, which on these occasions they do not dress up in the Cloke of Piety and Zeal. *Tantum Religio potuit suadere malorum.*

Moreover, there are no feuds to be compared to those which spring from dissenting in Religion: And till these cease, and an union be made, we must never expect to see that the States of Christendom, should agree together, to resist the common Enemy

mies of their Profession, & put a stop to their progress; Who prevail by means of our Divisions, and advance their Conquests by help of our misunderstandings. If one only place scituate in an Island, which was all Enemies to it, were capable to withstand, for so long a Time, the whole *Otteman* Power: What would it do, if the Armies of all Christians were joyned together to Repress the insolency of an enemy, detesting so much the Name of a Christian? I am perswaded that he is not victorious, but because we do not defend our selves. He gains no ground, but meerly for want of our Opposition; and gives us no wounds, but by those gashes which we give our selves. If we would stir by Agreement, for the glory of our common Master, all those advantages which we promise our selves, from the Victories we gain over our Fellow-brethren, are

not

not comparable to those which would accrue to us by our Conquests of strangers. And let not those Christian Princes, whose Territories lye far distant from *Constantinople*, flatter themselves in their own thoughts, with the advantage of their scituation; For those Frontiers, which serve at present for a Bulwark to Christendom, being once mastered by the *Turks*, they will easily force a passage into the heart of the most remote Countrys. If they but once have a liberty of entering upon our Borders and Confines, they will soon strike up an Alarm within the very Bowels of Europe; And it is too well known, how some of these parts have lately been weakned. I wish with all my heart, that the Drums and Trumpets of these Infidels, may be a means to gather Us once more together, and be as a signal to put us in mind of uniting our selves

ſelves quickly, and labouring altogether for our own preſervation.

In the laſt place, this conſideration might be added to the precedent ones, to make us ſee the Evil, that this Diviſion cauſes in States. Let us ſuppoſe that in a Kingdom, or any other Chriſtian State, thoſe who Govern it, ſhould perceive that they have been miſtaken in the Opinion; which they have held; and that ſeeing they have not the truth on their ſide, they are in danger of loſing their Souls. I dare affirm, that the Nature of this Diviſion is ſuch, that it would be almoſt impoſſible to procure their own Salvation, and the Salvation of thoſe who are under their Authority. The Intereſts of State are ſo mixed, and woven with thoſe of Religion; The intrigues and alliances, which are made with thoſe of the ſame communion, are ſo ſtrong, that in going about to ſe-

parate them, it would endanger a loſs of all. As for Example, who does not conceive, that if a King, who is a *Roman* Catholick ſhould come to believe that the Foundations of his Religion are not ſound, that (as the Proteſtants alledg) they contain certain Principles that are prejudicial to the Salvation of Souls; this Prince would not meet with impregnable difficulties to ſet his Conſcience at reſt? Is it not certain that ſo ſoon as he ſhould diſcover his Thoughts, his Subjects would riſe up in Rebellion againſt Him? The whole Body of his State would oppoſe his Deſigns, and his Allies would forſake him, to ſide with that Party, that ſhould be againſt Him? The ſame might be ſaid of Proteſtant Princes. The Politicians, who oppoſe themſelves to any change or innovation in Religion, of what nature ſo ever it be, who look upon it

as

as a Flame that must be quenched in the instant, would render all the endeavours of a Prince unprofitable, that should have any such thoughts. Therefore by this it is evident, that it is the Ground and Interest of all Christian States, to endeavour the healing of these Divisions; as well for their own subsistence and preservation, as for the safety and quiet of the Consciences of those who Govern them.

CHAP.

THE REUNITING OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART II.

Of the Causes of this Division which is among Christians.

CHAP. I.

That the Frame and Temper of Men's Minds doth much contribute to this Evil.

WHatsoever things pass through the Hands of Men, they alwayes savour of that quality which is predo-

minate in them; As Waters take their Tincture, from the Channels through which they run; if the Channels be impure, the Waters quickly lose that Purity, which from the Fountain Head they derived. So Christian Doctrine, the same which was given us by the Son of God, and proposed to us by his Apostles, is most pure and most Holy: But it has been much abused by the ill qualities of such as have handled it, since those blessed Times; It hath passed through foul hands, which have made it lose much of its Original Beauty. The Universal passion, and that which chiefly raigns amongst Men, is Vanity and Pride; and that likewise is it, which has given the first soil to Christian Doctrine. There have been some, who have thought it too plain and too course, for Wits higher than the common Level. Every one of those

those who have fancied themselves to have any degree of Light above others, have had a mind to cloath it after their own mind. Many have believed that they had a right to interpose their Judgments in the most profound Mysteries; Yea, some have been so rash and bold, as to add of their own Heads, what they esteemed necessary to its perfection: and this it is that has given a beginning to the great diversity of Opinions, which are at this Day in Religion.

Hence has it come to pass, that some learned Doctors having made the first advance of their particular Opinions in Religion, others coming afterwards (thinking no less of themselves than the former) have taken a liberty of examining their Tenents, and have further thought they were obliged to overthrow them, and establish others, by which means they

hoped to make themselves famous, in being the Authors of a new Opinion, and Founders of a Sect. The first carried by the same Motive, which at the beginning had induced them to propose new Doctrines, were not willing to recant them; For it is not so much the perswasion of the Truth, of what they have broached, that obliges Men to persist in it, as the fear and shame of disowning that which they have once asserted, and that new-comers should be able to discover their faults, and teach them any thing. So that every one standing up for their own Notions, and being unwilling to let themselves be run down, and vanquished; This impertinent self-conceitedness, has laid the Foundation of these great Divisions.

This Evil might in some measure have been suffer'd, if such had been contented to declare their Opinions, as

as the meer productions of humane Wit, and if particular Persons keeping them within their own breasts, had left others the liberty of examining them, either to receive, or reject them, according to the judgement that they should make of them. But as when some thinking they want credit to establish what they are desirous to put in practise, have commonly recourse to a superiour Authority, whereby they procure that to pass in their favour, which otherwise would not have been considered of: So every party contending in matters of Religion, and not believing themselves sufficiently strengthned by their own Reasons, and Authority, does presently declare it to be the Interest of God, and his cause that they defend, and every one of these particularly, protests that whosoever rejects what he delivers, rejects the Heavenly Doctrine, throws down the Pillars of

of Christian Religion, walks out of the true Church, and exposes himself to Eternal Damnation. So that drawing thus straightly the Bonds which should engage Men's Consciences, in their Parties they have occasioned particular animosities, widened the Division, and rendred the Evil more incurable. For whither will not the Wit of Man carry him, when he shall be possessed with an Opinion, that whatsoever he does, tends to the Glory of God, and the Salvation of his own Soul?

There are two different sorts of Spirits, to whom the Doctrin of the Gospel is propos'd, the first are bold and active; the second timorous and always very distrustful of themselvs: The former easily undertaking to establish new Opinions, and to give begining to Division; the latter contributes not a little to the fomenting &encreasing of it, throughtheir timorousness

rousness and facility, not daring to depart from what their Predecessors have prescribed them. And as in Seditions the froward and busy Spirits are they which raise the tumults, and stir up others; and the Rabble being prepared by some artificial and plausible Declaration, finish the disorder, by the liberty which they give themselvs, and is allowed them by the grand Mutineers: So it is in Religion; for the ordinary People being naturally ignorant, cannot hit upon the right way, but by chance; It must be their great good fortune, or to say better, a Divine conduct which must guide them to it, and not any choice or search of their own. And yet it is the most inferiour sort of People, that are the fiercest and most eager in maintaining the Religion which they blindly follow, and whereof they for the most part have but little knowledg and understanding.

ing. *Tertullian* complains, in his Apology, that the *Pagans* condemned the Doctrin of the Christians, which they were ignorant of: and how many Christians are there now a days, who condemn the Opinions of other Christians, without knowing them? 'Tis therefore from this popular and blind passion, that the Grand Leaders and Politick Heads of Factions serve themselves to strengthen their Sides, advance their designs, and take away all means of Reconciliation between party and party.

Now these Heads of Sects, and all those, who following their principles, pretend to have a share in their Glory, do play another Game, to attain more easily to their Ends; which is this: they strive many times to engage the Politicians in their Cause, making them believe that their Doctrine is the most proper to hold the common people in subjection,

ction, and in obedience to their Superiours; that it prevents all kinds of Insurrections, Seditions, and Rebellions. In effect, I believe there is scarce any Sect of Christians, which does not boast to have this advantage above others; they tax all those who oppose their Tenets with building upon such Foundations, as are only fit to bring disturbance upon States, and to alienate the affections of Subjects from their Princes; at least they affirm that others have Principles which do not press home enough this Article, of the obedience which is due to Magistrates. 'Tis well known what the *Roman* Catholicks say of the Doctrine of the Protestants on this Subject; 'Tis also well enough known on the other side, how the Protestants reproach them, by Reason of the power which they seem to give to a Forein Nation to Conquer such as deny Obedience

to

to the *Pope*'s Authority. Whence it comes to pass, that according to the Face which the Politicians set on these things, they favour those, whom they suppose do contribute most by their Doctrine; to the peace and quiet of States, which is their Soveraign good. Likewise when a Religion is once established in any State, it is the prudence and care of those who govern, that makes them hinder a change, by reason of the great disorders which may arise from it. Therefore those Doctors who have no other aim, than that of maintaining the Opinions which they have established or embraced, do most of all their endeavour to bring into disgrace, with the Magistrates of their Country, all of different Tenets from theirs. They make them believe that all those who are not of the same mind with them, go about to undermine the Foundations of Religion,

gion, that they might substitute another in its roome; Thus by their subtilty they Arm the Secular Power, against those who would promote Doctrines perchance were innocent, or better Founded than theirs.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

That there has never yet been made a true distinction in Christian Religion, of what is really Essential and Fundamental, and what is not.

ALthough the minds of those who have embraced Christianity, may be diversly disposed; yet they all agree in this one Point; that there are certain Doctrines in Religion which are Essential, and Fundamental, and others likewise of less importance. They all acknowledge that there are some, from which they cannot depart, without doing a manifest prejudice to Religion, and to the Salvation of Souls; and that there are also others, to which they may adhere without wounding their consciences.

ſciences. But there could never yet any Boundaries be agreed upon, which ſhould be eſtabliſhed for the right ſetling all People in their proper and natural Limits: Every one would make his own Opinion paſs for Fundamental, and abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation. Whereas had we but well diſtinguiſhed betwixt theſe two ſorts of Doctrines, had we but laid good Foundations to keep theſe Tenets hereafter from being confuſed, this Evil of which we complain, might eaſily be remedied, and all Parties might be Re-united, as I undertake to make appear to You, in the Third Part of this Treatiſe.

In the mean time, who does not evidently ſee, that for want of knowing rightly how to diſtinguiſh between theſe two ſorts of Doctrines; the greateſt part of the Diviſions which are amongſt Chriſtians, is ob-

ſerved to ariſe? How many queſtions are there, as unprofitable as curious, which have made a ſeparation in Men's Judgments? How many persons, without ever having examined or underſtood them, have ſided ſome with one, and ſome with the other, only that they might not be ſuſpected to be without Religion, without Devotion, and without Knowledg? How many Diſputes likewiſe are there, which have no other Foundation, than certain different terms and expreſſions, whilſt all agree in the ſubſtances, and make all their quarrels but about words? 'Tis certain, that would they examine the Foundation of their Contentions, without paſſion, and without prejudice, they would be aſhamed for having loſt ſo much time, and expreſt ſo much heat about a thing which merited it not. Every one knows how many diſputes the ſubject

subject of Grace hath caused amongst the *Roman* Catholicks. 'Tis well known with what ardour the Defenders of an Irrespective Science, which they attribute to God, have maintained their Doctrine against those who establish an Absolute Decree. This is that which has formed two Parties amongst their Doctors; This Difference has continued, and is renewed in our time betwixt the *Jansenists* and the *Jesuits*, although under other terms. There is no person ignorant, unto what a degree of Division they have come about this business, and the strange consequences which are apprehended from it. In the mean time, how a new Doctor who hath caused the Memoires of Grace to be printed, maintains that all the difference, is but only in words. He undertakes to put an end to it, by showing that they all agree in the Foundations, and are all

in the same mind with St. *Augustin*, *Fulgentius*, St. *Thomas Aquinas*, all the School-men, and the Council of *Trent*. If it be so, who will not suspect, that the like thing may not possibly have happened, in many other points, wherein (to our misfortune) different Opinions have made a separation and division?

I place in the rank of Questions, which are not essential and fundamental in Religion, such as are made about the business of the Government of the Church, and the Ceremonies instituted for ruling the exteriour part of its Worship. For how much stir has been made concerning those things, which have no other ground, than the general Rule proposed by St. *Paul*, namely, *That all things be done with Order and Decency in the Church*! 'Tis sufficient therefore, that *in these Matters*, we have always before our eyes, that which may

may advance the Glory of God, and edifie his Church. For indeed we may dress in a different manner, the proper means for obtaining so good an end. The use and application of this general Rule, might be left to the Liberty of each particular Church, to do what they should judg most expedient, according to the Circumstances of the Place, times, dispositions of Mens Spirits, and such like. They should only take heed of introducing in these things some practice, which might be directly opposite to any of the essential and fundamental Doctrines. Some require that the Teachers of the Church should be equal, and others would have a Superiority and Inferiority amongst them. Some are for an outward Pomp in the Church, and others would have a great plainness. Some believe that the Ornaments of the Places of Devotion,

breed a respect to the exercise, and others think that the meanness of the place, takes off the thoughts of the faithful from material carnal things, to lift them upward to those which are Cœlestial and Divine. Some love Musick, and the sound of melodious Instruments in Divine Service: and others say, that it disturbs the mind, and carries away the devotion, which should be fixt in those Holy places. Some are of Opinion that the Riches of the Ministry, their Train, and outward Pomp, gains them the veneration of the People, who are apt otherwise to despise them: Others judg that the poverty and simplicity of the Ministers of the Church, does better accord with the Genius of the Gospel, and produce more saving effects in the minds of Men, than all Worldly splendour. It is in these kinds of Questions and Differences, that I shall

ſhall let you ſee we ſhould bear one with another; for I hold, that there may happen occaſions, where one of theſe practices may be moſt expedient, and moſt edifying, and others, or that which is oppoſite to it, may likewiſe prove of very great benefit; always provided, that order and decency be preſerved; Thus muſt there be a mutual Toleration amongſt Chriſtians, and a charitable and brotherly ſupport one towards another.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

That Men have departed from the true Fundamentals of Christian Religion, to take up others which have nothing of Solidity in them, and which put these Divisions amongst Them.

'TIs a general Opinion amongst all Christians, that it is from God alone that we must receive the Articles of our Faith, and the Rule of our Actions. They agree also in this, that it is in his Word, contain'd in the Old and New Testament, that those two things are compriz'd, and that it is from thence, as from two Fountains, that they must be drawn down to us. The Councils themselves, namely those which are

are called General, and to which ſome Chriſtians do attribute as much authority and infallibility, as to the Holy Scriptures, confirm this truth. For they have never undertaken to decide any point of Religion, but by the Holy Scriptures; They have concluded that they ought to aſcend up thither for eſtabliſhing of any Doctrine, which muſt have power and authority amongſt Chriſtians. And yet have we departed inſenſibly from this principle. We have quitted this ſaving Tenet, by attributing to Man, that which is not due, but to God alone. We have made ſuch Doctrines as are meerly humane, to paſs crowded amongſt thoſe which are handed down to us from God. Juſt as they put off falſe Money by making it gliſter as much as may be, and then mixing it amongſt ſuch as is currant Coin, that it may not be ſuſpected. This is it that has given

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ſcope to contentions, and afterwards been the grand cauſe of Diviſion. Some have been of Opinion that whatſoever ſpecious pretences, and whatſoever plauſible names have been given to the deciſions of the moſt famous Aſſemblies, are all this while but Humane Sentiments, which ought to be examined before they are received. They ſay that they are but particular Men, who have propoſed their Opinions in theſe Aſſemblies; That many times in theſe occaſions, 'tis the credit, readineſs of wit, eloquence, or ſome force of argument more ſpecious than ſolid, which makes theſe Opinions paſs for Articles of Faith. That thoſe particular Perſons who compoſe theſe Aſſemblies may be miſtaken, notwithſtanding all their Lights and Knowledge; That by conſequence, a Company of them, how numerous ſoever they be, are ſubject to defects,

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and to the errours of the Members whereof they are composed. *Lastly*, That the very diversity which is sometimes found in the decisions made by them, justifies enough their Opinion, and makes us see that all these decisions are subject to tryal. Others who are of a different sence, maintain that without the decisions of the Councils, we should have but an imperfect Rule of our Belief. That the Holy Scripture does not comprehend all that which is taught us in the Church. That there are also many things in the Holy Scriptures, that have need of explaining and interpretation. That on these occasions there is none to whom we can have better recourse, than to the Church, to whom God has promised the ordinary conduct of his Spirit. That the Church cannot make her Voice be better understood, and declare to us her sence, in a fashion

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more authentique, than when ſhe is repreſented, and as it were united in theſe Solemn Aſſemblies. They are perſwaded, that when ſuch an Aſſembly is lawfully gathered, it does of Right enjoy an Infallibility, equal to that of the Holy Scripture, that it is God himſelf, who ſpeaks as much in one, as the other.

In the mean time both one and the other, agree in this point, that the Scripture is infallible, that it is the foundation of the truth, and the ſoveraign Rule of all Holineſs. The latter alſo pretend, that although they plead in favour of the authority and infallibility of the Church, they find argument enough in the Scriptures, for maintaining their doctrine, and confounding of Errour. But let us, for the preſent, lay by this controverſy of the Authority of the Church, and return back to that principle, which all agree upon. It

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may be we may draw Rules and Directions enough from thence, so that we shall not be obliged to enter upon this other Dispute; which shall be more particularly examined in the third Part of this Treatise. Let us therefore only hear what *Tertullian* says upon this Subject. *Apolog. Chap.* 47. Where giving a Reason of the Divisions which he saw in his time about Christian Religion; He says that, *Those who have separated themselves from the Communion of the Church, have in the doing it, violated their faith to Jesus Christ; For he it is that hath taught us the rule of truth, which he caused to be delivered to us by those holy Men, who had the happiness to hear his Word, and receive his divine Instructions; That all which is not conformable to that Rule, has been invented by new Doctors, who came not till after those Bleßed Disciples of the Son of God.* In this manner hath this worthy

worthy Man ascended up to the very Fountain Head of this Evil, and discovered the Original of those miserable Divisions. And St. *Augustin* in that remarkable passage against *Maximin* the *Arrian*, *Let us lay aside* (said he) *all prejudices which we may conceive, I from the Council of* Nice, *and thou from that of* Arimini; *Let us both one and the other be guided by the Authority of the Holy Scripture, which is no partial witness, but is as well common to one, as to the other.*

Therefore, as when a Man hath once given way to some dangerous Principle, what care soever he takes to avoid the ill consequences thereof, he is sure to fall insensibly upon them. Likewise whatsoever corrective may be brought for the taking away from the Antimony its malignant qualities, there shall nevertheless break forth some ill effects of it: So this Doctrine being once setled, that

that Men must be consulted and followed, concerning the Articles of Faith, we do give them by little and little an Authority, which appertains only to him, who is truth it self. The consequence of which is, that we become in a condition of acquiescing blindly on whatsoever the Caprichio's of Men can invent in matters of Religion. Every one believes himself to have as much right herein, as his Companion; Every one endeavours to make his particular Opinions pass for essential truths; Every one condemns as Heretiques, and as People out of the way of Salvation, all those who do not submit themselves absolutely to their Rule; In brief, every one maintains, that there is no true Church, but that which receives the Opinions, which he has promoted, to whom alone belongs the Right of Governing all that which concerns

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Religion. And although many make a difficulty of attributing infallibility to the Church; nevertheless they hold that they ought to submit to these decisions, at least, if they themselves cannot pass for Deciders. All which has much contributed to the forming of Division, and to the fomenting it, after it is kindled.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

That the dislike which has been had at the simplicity of Christian Religion, has been an occasion, that Men have given it a different aspect from that which it had in its beginning.

I Do not believe that there is any Christian, who will not agree with me, that Christianity was never more pure, more Holy, and more proper to induce its Professors to Vertue, than in its Birth. That was a time wherein the saving Principles of the Gospel, were only received from the mouth of the Son of God, and from those holy Men whom he had inspired. This was the true Golden Age of the Church, abounding in Saints, in Confessors, and in

Martyrs. And I believe that this truth will also be granted me, that then at that time when Christian Religion was so pure, and exempt from Errour, its Doctrine was also most simple and most naked; It was free from all those subtil questions, which some caused to be started up in the succeeding Ages. It was not subjected to the burthensome observation of so many Ceremonies, which are as strange habits and ornaments, wherewith it has been since cloathed. There are to be found amongst us two sorts of Persons, which have much contributed to this Evil. The first are those subtil Spirits, who besides their own natural wit, are still more refined in the Schools of the Philosophers: The second are such as are pleased at some showe and appearance, who have not yet been able to quit the inclinations, which the World has inspired

inspired them with for these outward things, and who cannot forbear the having some esteem for the pomp of the *Jewish* and *Pagan* Ceremonies. The first sort have thought that Christian Religion would be much more considered, if it should contain many Misteries, which were obscure and difficult to comprehend; Judging, that as plainness causes contempt, obscurity would gain it respect and veneration. They have *formed* difficulties upon all the points of Religion, to exercise their wits on, and to show their skill and learning, which they bring with them from the Schools. They have caused doubts to arise from the things which are most easy. In a word, they have changed the Christian School, into a School of Branglings and Disputes. Which heretofore caused a certain Person to say, that *the Philosophers had been the Patri-*

arches of the Heretiques.

The other Spirits, who are for having ſome ſhow in Religion, fancy that if the Chriſtian Church, were but reduced into the ſimplicity which it had in its firſt riſe, it would have but a few Followers. They ſee that Men naturally do love that which pleaſes the Senſes, and which conveys devotion into the heart, by the Eyes and Eares. It is from this notion, that all theſe ſeveral different Ceremonies are crept in amongſt us, which we ſee practiſed among Chriſtians. They have retained *Jewdaiſme*, nay more, they have brought in ſuch *Paganiſme*, as they have deemed moſt proper, to imprint, by outward objects, ſome inward Motives to Devotion and Zeal. They have imagined that they could with profit make uſe of thoſe things, which the others abuſed. They have ſuppoſed, that that was

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the way to ſanctifie the profane Veſſels of the *Egiptians*, and bring back that to its true uſe, which nouriſhed the *Pagan* Superſtition.

In the mean time, how ſpecious ſoever the Reaſons and Pretences are which one and the other alledg in their own favour. Theſe are they who have given the firſt ſtroke to the Peace and Union of the Church. For if at firſt, they had religiouſly kept themſelves to the ſmall number of Rules, which the Goſpel preſcribes us; they had never ſeparated into ſo many Sects, as have been formed, concerning ſuch queſtions as the curioſity of Men has cauſed to be raiſed. *Jeſus Chriſt* tells us, that his Yoke is eaſy to bear. He invites all even to the very little Children to believe in Him; which he would not have done, if the Faith had certainly brought with it all thoſe abſtruce Rules and Miſteries which are

propoſed to us now. The Holy Scriptures do preſent but very few Doctrines, in compariſon of the Exhortations to Vertue, which are there made us. And the Goſpel is not given us, but that we ſhould believe that *Jeſus* is the *Meſſias*, and that in believing it, we may have life through his Name: *John* 20. To be lawfully Baptized, It is ſufficient to believe from the Heart, that *Jeſus Chriſt* is the Son of God: *Acts* 8. Saint *Paul* reduces all his preaching to this only Point. That *Jeſus Chriſt* is the *Meſſias*, foretold by the Prophets, that he was to be crucified, and riſe again from the dead, *Acts* 17. The ſame reports that the extent of his knowledg is to know *Jeſus Chriſt*, and Him Crucified. The Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, requires not more of him that would approach neer to God, but the knowledg of two things; that there is one God, and

and that he is the Rewarder of those who seek after Him. And St. *James* makes pure Religion, and blameless before God, to consist in visiting the Widow and Fatherless in their afflictions, and in keeping themselves from being defiled by this World. As if they would have said, that the Principal design of Religion is, to bend all ones study to Sanctity, to Purity, and to Charity. The Creed of the Apostles, contains whatsoever is Essential in the Rules of Christian Religion. And what that teaches us is sufficient for the Consolation of our Souls, and to induce us to a holy Life. Let us but examine all the Apologies of the first Christians, written on purpose to discover their Opinions in Religion: They justifie all that which I assert. They comprehend but a very few Articles of Faith, as concerning the existence of God, the Incarnation of our Lord,

his Birth, Life, Death and Resurrection. Hence it is that they have defended themselves from the accusations which were brought against them, that they have resisted the strongest temptations, and sustained with courage the most violent Persecutions. If they had continued in that course, and had not consulted the Schools of *Plato* and *Aristotle*, concerning the Rules of Religion, there had been no change made; then had there been no separation in Christianity. If the wit of Man had not been ambitious to mix his own, with the Divine Oracles, the Church would have still been in its innocency, and in its purity: Such are all these new Opinions, which being destitute of the evidence of truth, have separated Mens Spirits, and caused this unhappy Division.

And as to this matter of Ceremonies, and of the outward show of the

the Church; If they had considered them as simple Ornaments, which are nothing of the Essence of Religion; If they had not multiplyed them to so vast a number. If herein, they had kept up themselves to the simplicity of their practice in the Primitive Church. They had had no occasion for any contests concerning these things, and every one might have easily found wherewithall to be satisfied. But since they have without measure, increased the number of Ceremonies; So that they have not left Christians the Liberty of making the least step in Religion, without upholding it by some Ceremony; They have put things to a tryal; Every one has pretended to have a right to speak his sence thereof, which has made many to separate, and given occasion of Division.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

That many do make use of Religion, to serve their particular Interests, and the advantages of a temporrl Life.

THe greateſt Evil which Reigns in Society, is, that a right diſtinction has never been made between the ſolid and true goods, and thoſe which have no foundation, but in the imagination of Man. We often preſer a Worldly intereſt before all the advantages of the Soul, and the hopes of that which is to come. Sometimes alſo after a moſt wicked and deteſtable manner, there are thoſe who make Religion, and an appearance of Devotion, ſerve for the obtaining or preſerving ſome temporal and paſſing good. Inſomuch, that as

as it is from this particular interest, which contentions do ordinarily arise, it must not be thought strange, if being mixt in Religion, it causes separation and division there. Religion is but the specious pretext which these People make use of, for advancing their affairs, and establishing their fortunes in the World. 'Tis no more to them than an accessary to attain to their principal, which is their aggrandizing and making themselves powerful. And since it is not the glory of God which they propose to themselves in Religion, we must not wonder, if God permits Discord to ruine a design, the motives whereof are so vile and so shameful. When a Religion is once established in an Estate, the most do not examine whither or no it be well founded in its Rules; and whether it contribute to the salvation of all. Every one consults

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whether the profession which is made thereof, may be accomodated to the posture of his own affairs, and to the subsistence of his Family. The most principal Persons of the State think they ought to maintain it against all others, at what Price soever. They think, that if they should leave to private Men a Liberty of examining it, there would happen a great deal of trouble by the contradiction of those who might oppose it. So that it is not at all any Pious Motive, which incites them to maintain that Religion which bears the sway, but an Interest meerly Politique and Worldly. It is not the advancement of God's glory, and defence of the truth, which they propose to themselves: 'Tis their own advancement, which they endeavour to manage by the Rules of Humane Prudence; and this Prudence ordinarily suggests to them, not to exercise any

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but an outward Devotion for the attaining of their Ends. Whence it comes to pass that God (cursing this conduct) permits, in despight of all their prudence, some bold Spirits to arise up amongst them, who freely discover their Opinions; daringly publish the defects of that Religion, which bears so much sway, make themselves heads of Factions, and sow Divisions not only in the Religion, but likewise in the State. I leave it to those who have but the least insight into the History of our Times, to make proof of this truth, by examples known to every one.

The Interests of private Persons do not work with less power on their spirits, than the Interests of a State busie the Politicians who govern it: And their passions likewise do not contribute less to the disorders and divisions in matters of Religion.

ligion. How many are there, who coming to eſtabliſh themſelves in a Country, where divers Religions are tolerated, do preſently queſtion which of theſe Religions they ought to follow; whereupon they conſult this kind of Prudence, which obliges them to find out that profeſſion which is the probableſt to turn beſt to accompt. If there be any Great Man in the State, and they expect ſome ſupport or protection from Him; They take ſpecial care not to throw themſelves into any communion which their Protector ſhall not approve of. They particularly encline to engage themſelves in the Religion of the Prince, whom they are more afraid of offending, than their own Conſciences. Others there are likewiſe, who although they ſee one of theſe Communions leſs conſiderable in the State than the other is, by reaſon of its weakneſs and ſmall

small number of Followers, will not yet forbear to list themselves there, meerly for some carnal Interests; 'Tis very often ambition, and the desire of Rule, which carries them thither, they hope to acquire more reputation, in having some eminent employment in a simple Barge, than if they were thrust amongst ordinary Seamen in a great Fleet. They make a large preamble to those of their Party, telling them a fine story how they are disinteressed and disengaged of all things that may receive a temptation, and might make them hope for any advantage in the world: They declare that they have preferred a Religion abandoned and persecuted, before one wherein they might have had sufficient profits, and advancements; And if they obtain not speedily what they aimed at, they let them know that they are powerfully solicited to forsake them, and that

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their falling off will cause a considerable Rent amongst them. These People draw false conclusions from their false Principles, as if ambition and self-interest did not many times work by occult ways, and under false pretences; and as though Men travelled not sometimes to a vain glory by back ways, and to advance their affairs in the World, under the mask of Zeal and Devotion; and these are chiefly such as make the greatest noise in their Society: These are they who are the most Zealous in appearance; They who declaim most highly against such as do not approve of their Party. Lastly, these are they who contribute most of all to Division, to strengthen, in favour of it, a Body whereof they would make themselves Masters. So that in the choice of a Religion, Men do ordinarily take that which is cleare contrary to the Precept of

Jesus

Jesus Christ. They do not above all things seek the Kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof: But they seek every other thing before that which is most important: We should not only prefer God's interest and Glory before our temporal advantages, but we ought not to desire those very advantages, but for the Glory of God and our own Salvation; and leave the whole disposal thereof to the providence of him, who takes particular care of the least Creatures. These People on the contrary are very inquisitive to know in what way of Worship they may live most commodiously with all their Family; afterwards they informe themselves, and seek about on all sides by what means soever to widen their Consciences, that so they may favour, without trouble or remorse, the Passion which rules them.

After that, Judge if these Men (so disposed) are not in a condition, blindly to follow those, to whom they have joyned themselves: If they who move not, but by such ill Principles, are not capable of being made subject to what-soever shall be desired of them, to advance their own Society, and Ruine others. Hence it is that all those dangerous prejudices does arise, which are in Religion, like a thick Cloud, that obscures the Understanding. This it is, that hinders us from discovering the Truth, and from working by the Motives of a sincere Charity. After once a particular Interest hath taken place in our Spirits, it excludes all others from thence. It cannot suffer any concurrent; And, if we be sometimes obliged to take in any other

ther Interests, it is but upon condition, that they shall be subject to that which was first seated in our heart and affections.

THE REUNITING OF CHRISTIANITY.

PART III.

Of the proper means to Reunite all Christians into one sole Communion.

CHAP. I.

Of the ill Means which has been made use of hitherto, for putting a Remedy to the Evil of this Division.

AFter having considered the Nature of this Evil, whereof we

have undertaken the Cure: After having made known the extent, the depth, and the consequences; found out the causes, and traced them up to their very source; Order directs us to come to the remedies which are requisite to the curing thereof. But before we propose them, it will not be at all from the purpose, to say something of those which hitherto have been unprofitably employed therein. And I do not wonder that we could never yet see any success of whatsoever has been done, for stopping the course of so great disorder. Men have always built upon this wrong Foundation; That this Evil was of it self incurable, and that therefore they could only study how they might stop the course of its most pernicious symptoms. They have believed it was but like going about to save a sick Persons Life, that was given over by the Physicians.

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They never thought of a means of reducing all the Societies of Christians into One. They have imagined that the difference of their Opinions was too great, and concerning matters too important, ever to bring it about, that all the ends should be made to meet together. They have fancied that the Alienation of Mens minds was too inveterate, the prejudices too many, the interests too different and too deeply rooted, reasonably to hope that either one or other, would make the first advance towards such an agreement. Insomuch that every one has supposed it was enough for him to strengthen himself in his Opinions, and to establish them by good Reasons, and to weaken those which are opposite to them, that they may draw to their sides such as should reject them.

It is on this Foundation, that all those have hitherto worked, to

whom God has bestowed any great Talents, and who have had any Name in Divinity. All these disputes, conferences, and volumes of Controversies are not employed, but to this end, *viz.* to maintain the Doctrine, which they have embraced, and to induce others to the receiving of it. But in this, all these great inconveniences have never been considered; That those very same who write, and who dispute with so much heat and subtilty, are many times as much byassed as others, and their passions are as violent as those in vulgar Persons; That oft-times they alledg on both sides very specious Reasons, and such as cause new difficulties to arise, of which they cannot easily clear themselves; That all private Persons have not the time, and conveniences requisite, to be able to read over these kind of Writings, and hear these Disputes;

That

That of those likewise who are in a condition to apply themselves hereto: There are but few who bring not some strong conceipts in favour of those Opinions, which they have followed before. Insomuch that on these occasions, we see but few, who give not all the applause to the Doctors of their Communion, and esteem not the others as confuted, and bafled Teachers. So as I dare boldly say, that all these Writings, and all these Disputes being far off from producing any good effects, shall but cause the minds of Men to be more wedded to their Opinions, and remove them further off from any sincere Reconciliation. Let us say then with Saint *Augustine*, *Epist.* 122. That this Evil has more need of tears and lamenting, than of large Writings and great Volumes. Many times the Discourses which have been us'd for obliging the van-

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quiſhed party to follow another profeſſion, have ſerved but ſtill more to animate the Parties, and fortifie them in their ſeparation.

Therefore many ſeeing the ſmall ſucceſs of this Remedy, which has been endeavoured, have judged that they ought to change their Method, and work the Cure after another way. For effecting of which, they have diſtinguiſhed between ſuch Societies of Chriſtians, whom they have believed to have groſs and dangerous Opinions; and others whom they ſuppoſed not to lye in ſo great Errour. As to the firſt, they have given them over as ſick Perſons, in ſo deplorable a condition, that their Diſeaſe is ſtronger than all Remedies. But they have made ſome ſteps towards the aſſiſtance of the latter; they have offered them a hand of Reconciliation, and made them hope to meet together,

ther, in certain terms and expressions, whereon they should agree. This is it, that all those have endeavoured, who have hitherto applyed themselves to the Reuniting of the *Roman* Catholicks and Protestants. This is the way which they have followed, who would have agreed the *Lutherans* with the *Calvinists*, and these again with the *Arminians*, and others who are gone out of their Communion. And yet after a world of trouble, and writings composed on this Subject, these designs have proved abortive, and these essayes unprofitable. For not to say any thing of the distinction which they make between pernicious Doctrines, and those which are not so, (which is only contriv'd by their own sentiments, whereby they are already pre-engaged.) Is it not true, (as I have observed in the Preface,) that they are particular interests that have

have slipt in, and diverted the blessing of God, from a design, where another End was pursu'd than his Glory? As also that they have rather endeavoured herein to lull a sleep, and give some kind of present ease to this Evil, than to cure it perfectly by any effectual Remedy. There has been made a certain mixture of Doctrines, and a composition of things which can never be incorporated together, whereas they ought to have laboured to purifie Christian Religion, and separate it from that mixture of all strange things, and bring it back to its first simplicity. Indeed they have failed herein, for want of looking up to the Fountain Head of this Evil, to discover what first made this separation among Christians, of what communion soever they are. We ought therefore, since it is so, to find out a means how to propound to all

all Christians in general, something wherewith to satisfie them in the overtures, which shall be made them, and cause them all to understand the Interest which they have to reunite themselves in one and the same Principle.

In short, Some there are who have fancied, that Councils and General Assemblies might put a good period to this Evil, by their Authority and great Learning, but many times Interests and prejudicate Opinions raign as well in these Assemblies, as amongst the particular Persons which compose them. For we ordinarily see that these kind of companies make Mens spirits more obstinate in their first sentiments, and cause a less disposition to an Agreement. We see besides that these same Assemblies are very seldome formed, but under the Authority of

of one of the Sects of Christians, and that whatsoever is proposed therein, is to fortifie them the more against others, and to fix them more and more in their first Opinions. This is that which has caused many absolutely to reject all Assemblies of this kind, and has been the ground of that common saying, that, *Every General Council begets a Warre.* Therefore for the right management of this Designe, all Christians generally should agree together upon all things which regard their common good; they should all work upon the same Principle, and if they convene any Assembly for the attaining to so good an end; no Christian Society should be suffered to prevail by its Authority, and power over the rest: But all should have the Liberty of proposing

posing their Opinions, to be afterwards determined by that which shall be for the common good.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The first meanes.

To lay aside all prejudices against others, and to throw off all particular Interests, that so nothing may be proposed by us, but the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls.

WE have already shown, that there is nothing ruines more the Peace of the Church, than the Interest of particular persons. That the greatest obstruction to this Reunion, is our prejudice against other Societies, which in time strengthens our preconceived Opinions. Therefore what we should do *out of hand* for the successfull carrying on of this design, is, to cast off all particular Interests,

Interests, and all these prejudices. I mean not to own any but the true and lawful Interests, that all should meet in one point, which is that of the glory of God, our own Salvation, and the good of those with whom we desire to be rejoined. And it is farther requisite, to lay aside all those prepossessions of Spirit, which may render us less inclinable to those propositions of peace, that may be offered us. And I am perswaded that were we free from such pre-engagements and prejudices, we should favourably hearken to all overtures of reconciliation which should be made us.

As for the lawful Interests which I speak of, & are fit to be proposed in this affair, they are such as have no regard to any imaginary good, but are real, solid, and essential to Man. Also this same good is never separated from the Interests of the

Glory of God, and the eſtabliſhment of truth. I exclude therefore out of the rank of right motives, which ſhould guide us in the ſearch of the true Chriſtianity: Firſt of all, whatſoever has relation to the advantages and commodities of the preſent life. I put into this number them who thirſt after honours, riches, pleaſures, and whatſoever is the object of any carnal deſire. Hither I alſo refer whatſoever contributes to the ſatisfaction of our inordinate paſſions, where they revolt from the obedience which they owe to reaſon. I am certain that this Principle will be approved by every one. There is no Man who will not confeſs that things ſo different can never be match'd together. All will agree in the general Theſis, that as there is no Union betwixt Light and Darkneſs: So we cannot joyn the ſtrict holineſs of the Cœleſtial Doctrine, with

with the impure liberty of our Passions. But there often slip in certain particular Interests, the which being more secret, and such as do pass more dexterously under the favour of some specious pretence, are not yet less prejudicial to the peace of the Church. Such is an inconsiderate and turbulent Zeal in Men, which because it seems exempt from those other gross interests, of which we have been speaking, they appear as though they had only piety for their rule and measure in all their Motions. 'Tis for the most part observed, that this Zeal is nothing, but a meer obstinacy and self-conceitedness, which can never depart from that which it hath once received. This Interest which ordinarily arises, either from ignorance, from an inveterate custome, or from some other such motive, engages us so much the more in division, by how

much it is covered with the appearance of Devotion. And I am perſwaded that many of thoſe who read this part, if they conſider it with themſelves, will confeſs that I touch upon a String, which though ſmall, yet is not at all the leſs intelligible. To theſe apparent Intereſts, I joyn thoſe of ſome particular Perſons, who being willing to paſs for ſworn Enemies of inconſtancy, and levity, perſevere in the profeſſion which they have followed from their Infancy. They call it raſhneſs and Inadvertency, to depart ſo readily from thoſe Tenets in Religion, which they firſt embraced; and they hold, that before they can do it, they muſt be fully convinced of the falſeneſs thereof, and the evident peril which they incur by retaining them. Wherefore ſo long as they find any appearance, or probability, they cannot believe it ſtands with their prudence

dence to abandon them. I have known some of these, who have been so strongly prepossessed with this Opinion, that they could not forbear showing a less esteem of such as had embraced their sentiments, than of those who had still persisted in the contrary party. To these specious Interests, I must yet add one more; and that is a disposition of Spirit, which we find many to have, who being entred into a Communion, believe it would be a shameful thing, should it be said of them, that they have examined their Religion too late. They imagin, that should they confess they have continu'd in an errour to these Years, and that they had never in all this time perceived the weakness of their former profession, People would take all the rest to be want of discretion, irreligion, and impiety. To flatter themselves herein, they endeavour to make

ſome kind of ſuperficial conſideration, which they have made of the Rules of their Sect, paſs for an exact and profound ſearch into the reaſons of their belief. After which, they maintain it with confidence, as not at all doubting, but that they are in the right way. There are ſome others, who are directly oppoſite to thoſe, of whom I have now been ſpeaking; Theſe are ſuch as are inconſtant, and bid defiance to whatſoever they have formerly believed; who imagine that all new Opinions, which are propoſed to them, are far better than thoſe wherein they have been brought up. They are like thoſe of whom an Ancient ſays, that out of fear, they make all their prudence conſiſt in following every other councel, but their own. So theſe timorous Spirits in Religion, embrace the firſt Opinions which are propounded to them, and prefer always

ways new Doctrines, before those which were received before. We should therefore check all those bad inclinations, which nature, education, age, ignorance, and example may give us: For whilst we listen to any one of these voices, we shall be but in an ill condition to entertain the propositions of an Agreement. All these propositions will at the first instant appear suspicious to us, and at last we shall reject them absolutely.

After this, to do well, we must cast away from us all these unhappy prejudices against others, and high conceipts of our own Opinions, which cause almost all the disorders that ordinarily happen in the Church. These are so many clouds which darken the understanding, and hinder Men from seeing distinctly the Objects, upon which they should make their judgment. They are a pain-

ted Glasses, which represent to us all that we look on, the clear contrary way, as dyed with their own colour. How would you have a Man, whose spirit is filled with an infinite number of Ideas, upon which he is already fixed, be able, after this, to make room for those which are opposite to them, although they are really more effectual to his salvation? They must be all excluded to compare them together without prejudice, they must be seen naked, and that held, which shall be judged most reasonable. There has been not long since proposed, in Philosophy, an excellent way of right disputing, and keeping a direct course for searching out the truth. They say, that for effecting of this, all preconceived Opinions, and prepossessions of spirit must be absolutely cast away. That then they must not take up any, but the most plain notions, and

and ſuch Propoſitions as cannot be quarreled at by any who have the leaſt uſe of reaſon. Why then cannot we imitate this manner of procedure in Religion? Can we not for a while ſet aſide all theſe Opinions, which we defended heretofore with ſo much eagerneſs and heat, to examine them afterwards more freely, and without any paſſion, holding cloſely to our common Principle, which is the Holy Scripture? Can we notwithout any *prejudice* look upon the Foundations of Religion, which all they who are called Chriſtians do generally acknowledg, and the Principles which they all agree upon? Would it not be an infallible means to know with a diſintereſted mind, how we ſhould advance in a right way, and how we might build upon a ſolid Foundation, and ſuch as ſhould be approved by every one?

My

My desire therefore is, that these prejudices and strong fancies of our own Opinions may be quitted, which bind us in a Religion, rather by false appearances, than by Judgment and Reason. Hence is it that some boast of their antiquity, the succession of their Pastors, the Government of their Communion, their temporal advantages, the riches, splendour, and magnificence of their Temples, and Ornaments. Hence is it that others glory in their plainness, and the smallness of their number, the contempt which is made of them in society, and other things of this nature, which the World cannot relish. Lastly, there are others extolling the knowledge and talents of their Doctors: the sanctity, austerity, and mortifications of their Votaries, the Zeal of their Martyrs, and other exteriour things, and accidentals to Religion. For it may so happen,

pen, that all these may meet in Societies, which are not approved of by those, who boast of them, as so many titles in their favour. There are likewise some, who, although they seem not to regard any thing, but Religion, by putting away whatsoever is not essential to it, yet cannot forbear falling into prejudices and errours of dangerous consequence. Such are those who believe that their Doctrine is to be prefered before others, by reason of the number of the learned Men which defend it, the Arguments with which they appear to be supported, and the great motions of Virtue which they seem to inspire. They consider not that all these things may be also observed in the Societies, whose Doctrine they do not approve: That at least the Followers of the rest might make a like Judgment of their Doctrine; seeing the friends of each of them

them are prepossessed with reasons in favour of their own. We ought therefore for a while to cast off all these particular Sentiments, which form the divers Societies of Christians; in such manner, that it should not be the Authority of any one amongst them, that should bear sway over the rest; but the sole infallible Rule of truth, which is the Word of God: For, seeing that is universally received by all Christians, there ought to be no difficulty, in submitting to whatsoever it clearly teaches us. This being so, how can we doubt of the blessing of GOD, upon such an Enterprize, since we have no other thing for our Interest, than his Glory; for our Rule, than his Word; and for our End, than our Salvation.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

The Second meanes.

That we should not have for our Direction, more than one known and generally approved Rule, for all Christians to walk by.

WHen we say, that for the attaining to a perfect Reunion, we must be free from all obstinate prejudices; I mean not therby, the establishing of an indifference, and leaving Mens minds in a suspence, without knowing what to resolve on. Tis only to render many unsure foundations, suspected, and to search out for one which may be firm and solid, and which the whole World should agree to be so.

Now

Now there is but one of this nature, and that is the Sacred Word of God, which he hath given us by the Miniſtry of his Servants. He hath given it us expreſly to be the Rule, both of our Faith, and all our Actions, in what concerns his Service. And it is too evident, that all do not agree on other matters. All do not hold that the Church is infallible. All do not acknowledg, that there is an unwritten Word, which is of as much Authority, as that which is in the Writings of the Prophets and Apoſtles. All do not pretend that we muſt be guided by that, which the Holy Ghoſt ſhall dictate, by his ſecret motions in the Hearts of the Faithful. But all Chriſtians, without exception, hold, that God ſpeaking to us in his Holy Word, muſt be hearkened to, and that we muſt obey him without any reſtriction. If, beſides this, there ſhall

shall be found any Confession of Faith, which has been drawn from the Holy Scriptures, and drawn in such a manner, as that it retains a Doctrine so pure, that all Christians may securely receive it: It may very well be joyned with this Word, delivered to us from God. And such, in my Opinion, is the Apostles Creed: there never having been hitherto, as I have ever heard, any Christian who denyed to entertain it, as being an Extract, and Compendium of the Gospel. And, if that had been well practised, which the Council of *Chalcedon* enjoyned, of not adding any other Doctrine to this Symbole, we had never seen Christianity divided into so many Sects, as at present it is.

I shall not here undertake to prove the Divinity of this Holy Writing; as having now only to do with Christians, who all acknow-

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ledg it. This is a thing that I may possibly handle in the third Treatise, which I have promised to publish, in the Preface to this Piece. For my design therein is, to let all People of the World see the advantages of the Christian Religion above others: I shall also there endeavour to give to every one, a means of looking into it without these obstinate prejudices, which would certainly make us reject any Doctrine, how tending soever to our Salvation. At the present, me thinks, for the working with success towards a good Reunion, we should rise to a Principle wherein we all agree; It would be a very good step towards a Peace, when we should find a Subject wherein we could all Unite. For, according to that Universal Maxime, Things which agree in a Third, agree also together. If therefore we all receive the Word of God, as our Soveraign Rule;

Rule; might we not probably hope that we may be Re-united in other things, which are but dependances on that; especially if after we have cast away from us all our passions, and prejudicate Opinions, we bring only with us a true Zeal, and an ardent Charity? Moreover, being perswaded that the Doctrine contained in these Holy Scriptures is Divine, that it is true, that it is infallible, and that it is perfectly Holy, we shal without doubt conclude, that it is our Soveraign Rule: That it prescribes to us what we should all believe, and receive for our Salvation. And as this word expresly forbids us to add, diminish, or alter any thing in the Doctrine, which it lays open to us, we should look upon all other Doctrines received in any other Society of Christians, as very suspicious: We should not receive them, till after a careful examinati-

on of them, and upon sure conditi-
ons, how specious soever the pre-
tences were, under which they would
make them pass to us. Although
they should give them to us meerly
as Explications, Illustrations, and
consequences drawn from this word:
we should however look upon them,
but as Essays of Man's wit, whose
infirmity appears in all his actions.
All his meditations, his applicati-
on, his reasoning, his Humility, his
Prayers, and his Fastings, cannot hin-
der, but that there will remain still
great weaknesses of Flesh, which wil
render him lyable to contempt and
errour. There is none but God only
who is able to declare to Us the
things which are of God; because
there is none but God who knows
God; as an excellent Author of our
times has very well expressed. What
Men say of Him, is but babbling.
Whatsoever they bring thither of
their

their own, is but weak and doubtful. *De divinis, etiam vera dicere, periculosum est.* We must go to the very Truth it self, and ascend up to the Fountain Head. We must suspect all the Waters which have not passed through this Channel, although they appear never so excellent.

Oh that we had but made known with a little diligence amongst Christians, the value of this important Principle, as we have sown the seeds of Division, that we had avoided unprofitable questions and disputes; And had made Christian Religion easy and intelligible, as carefully as Particular Doctors have taken upon them the liberty of expounding this Scripture. Every one giving it the sence which his Genius, or rather his capricious Fancy, or Interest suggested to him: Every one having drawn the consequences from it,

which muſt favour his inclinations: Nay, and without ſticking there, every one has endeavoured to give to theſe conſequences, an authority equal to that of the Original, from whence he pretends to have drawn them. In this very manner have we ſeen Diſputes and Contentions ariſe, alſo Hereſies, Schiſmes, Diviſions, and different Communions. Every Society has made his particular confeſſion, which they pretend ought to be of as great authority, as the very Creed of the Apoſtles themſelves. And thus, as this Practice has ſtrengthened it ſelf in the Church, after the ſame rate alſo has Diviſion been ſtrengthened and augmented. It is therefore abſolutely neceſſary for the eſtabliſhing a good Peace in the Church, to reject all Inventions of Men, and not to lend an Ear, but to God only, ſpeaking in his Word. It is thus, that the great Perſons

have

have practised, who lived in the most pure Age of the Church. They have ever confined their mindes to the Holy Scriptures, as to the only Foundation of our Faith, and of our Salvation.

CHAP. IV.

The Third means.

Rightly to distinguish between the Doctrines, which the Holy Scriptures propound to be believed by true Christians; and what regards only the outward Government of the Church, and its Ceremonies.

THis Sacred Word, which we have said, is the only Foundation of the Churches subsistence, and of the Union of its Members, offers Us three sorts of things to be learnt by Us. It declares to Us; First, what we are to believe, for the Peace of our Consciences, and for obtaining Salvation, and Eternal life. It teaches us next, what relates to the

the Government of the Church, in the Exercise of its Discipline, and in the outward Practice of its Ceremonies. And Lastly, it gives Us saving Precepts, which serve for the Direction of our Lives, and Manners; Not only to be the outward Guide of our Actions, and of our Words: But also of our Affections, Inclinations, and most secret Motions of our Souls. This distinction being well established, and all its Members truly considered: We shall find that in the right management hereof, there will be no occasion of quarrelling, unless it be about the Rules proposed to our Faith. For as to what concerns the Precepts of Virtue, they are so clearly laid open in the Holy Scriptures, that in them there can be no ground for Controversie. All Christians know that God will be most highly loved and adored. All agree that

we must honour Father and Mother, according to the Commandment of God. All accord in this Point, that the Law of God forbids Murder, Adultery, Lying, &c. All acknowledg that these Laws are not meerly established to Rule the outward Form of Men in Society: But that they oblige us to conform the most secret thoughts and inclinations of our hearts, to the Purity and Sanctity which they command. After this we need not any other Rule, than that Abridgment of the Law, which the Son of God has reduced to these two admirable Precepts; To love God with all our affections; and our Neighbour as our selves. The Observation which might be made from hence, would Rule, as every one may perceive, all our actions; Insomuch that no Person could desire any thing more for the living holily, and justly. I know very well that

that there have been certain Doctors formerly amongst Christians, who by their interpretations, have gone aside from the strict observation of these Laws; But they have not only wanted the approbation of others, as well of their own Communion, as strangers: But also they themselves have always made profession of acquiescing, as others, in these sacred and inviolable Rules. They did not pretend to weaken them by their interpretations: they only sooth'd Men's consciences with a favourable sence, which they give to the circumstances of particular actions. Behold here one of the principal Articles of Faith; Nay, I dare say, the most important, and wherein consists the very Essence of Religion, which can give no cause of Division.

As to the Rules which the Holy Scriptures afford us for the Govern-

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ment of the Church, relating to its Discipline, and to its Ceremonies: 'Tis a strange thing that they should have so often given occasion of Disputes, and been the cause of separation and division. If the Holy Penmen had punctually prescribed, and ordered every thing that ought to be done in this matter; we should be obliged indispensibly to observe them. And we should have reason to separate our selves from those, who did depart from them. But seeing that this sacred Word is contented to give us, for this purpose, certain general Precepts: For St. *Paul* plainly tells us, that *These things must be done with Order and Decency*. Liberty is given without doubt to Christians, to dispose of these, according as they shall think convenient, having regard to the circumstances of Places, of Times, and of Persons, in keeping always within the Bounds of

of Decency, and Order. For, besides that, the Scripture has thus declared it self hereupon: The nature of the thing seems palpably to lead us to the same. There is no Body, who does not put a great difference between that which is essential to a thing, and that which is meerly accidental. All acknowledg, it is on the preservation of the first, that the subsistence of its subject does absolutely depend; that it can be very well maintained without the second, and that also more conveniently. Likewise that we should act quite otherwise for the first, than we should for the other. So to preserve health, or to recover it, though we strictly observe the Diet which is absolutely requisite, we can freely and without prejudice, change the Relishes and Tinctures, which we give to the Food, and to the Medicines.

This being once well setled, every one

one ſees how unreaſonable a thing it would be, to ſeparate about the occaſion of any difference, which might happen in outward matters, and accidentals to Religion, ſhould there be any Schiſme in the Church concerning the Order which is to be amongſt its Governours? Muſt this Holy Union be broken, becauſe ſome would have the Church be governed by Biſhops, and others would have an equality amongſt its Paſtors? Muſt we, becauſe of ſome diverſity in the Habits of thoſe who officiate in the Church, break the knot which ſhould tye all Chriſtians together? Is it juſt that for the Ornaments of the Temples, the poſtures wherein private Perſons ſhould be, during the acts of Devotion, and other ſuch Ceremonies, the peace of the Church ſhould be ruined, and the Unity of its Members? Has not the Primitive Church made it well appear, that there

there was no such matter of scruple, when it freely changed the practice, according as the times and occasions required it? Did not *Tertullian*, one of its principal Doctors, teach us, that the Rule of Faith continuing firm and constant; other things which regard the Discipline, do sometimes suffer alterations and changes? Were the Temples always set out in this magnificence, which they are in at present among Christians? Were Fastings always after the same manner observed? Were the Garments of Ministers of the Church always in the same mode? Have they at all times, and in all places received the holy Eucharist after the same fashion, as to their outward Gestures? Has there not always been great diversity in the practice of these things, and can we not still be able to suffer it, without being forced to separate, and dismember

member the Church, as we do at this present time?

I confess that in certain Ceremonies, some things may fall out to be practised, which would directly oppose to the Fundamental Points of Religion. But it would be easy to give a Remedy to this Evil, following the Order which I shall propose. We should in this case, look back to the very Precept it self, upon which we should all agree together. For if we all accord in what concerns the Doctrine, we shall find no great difficulty to accord, or at least to maintain a charitable judgment in the use of the Ceremony. If we were once but well Reunited together, in the Opinions which we should have of the Doctrine, I am assured, that we should bear with one another, in things which are not of that importance. If we joyned in

in the main essential matters, the necessaries would not easily separate us.

Behold then, how this happy means of Peace must be ordered. It is by establishing immediately, with great care, the bounds which are to be given to these two things; That is, First, that a right distinction be made between what serves for the outward conduct of the Actions of true Believers, and the essence, and internal concern of a good Christian: Next, that we labour and seek out by all the ways imaginable, how we may be Reunited in what respects the essence of Christianity. But for that which respects the outward Government, and the Ceremonies of the Church, some liberty should be given to the particular Societies of Christians. Herein regard must be had to the difference of Places and Climates, where they

they dwell, which often create more disgust to one sort of Government, than to another. Also there should be considered the diversity of their Politique Government, which may imprint some stamps of its Character upon that of the Church. Lastly, We should likewise have in consideration, what these Societies may have practised hitherto, with success in this respect, and leave them the entire disposal thereof, after having represented to them what shall be judged more profitable, and more commodious for them. This diversity must not alter the peace of the Church; It is not just, that agreeing together in the essential Points, we should break the bonds of our amity, for things which are not essential. How many Brothers are there, who although they be of different employments, yet for all this leave not off their living together as Brothers,

Brothers, and making up one and the same Family. I would therefore have an accomodation made herein, according to the Customes, and Practices of the Places, in which they live. That in all parts, where they should inhabit and sojourn, they might be subject to the Community of Christians, which should be there established, without condemning or blaming other Customes. That we should rather believe charitably, that every one has followed herein, the Order which has been supposed to be most convenient, and most requisite to Salvation; seeing that still the Principal which is comprehended in few Articles, continues firm. Thus St. *Paul* was accustomed to do, 1 *Cor.* 10. 33. Endeavouring to please, and accommodate all matters, without seeking after particular conveniencies, but only the Salvation of many. And when he

saw any who would be contentious in these things; He only answered them thus, 1 *Cor.* 11. 16. *We have no such Custome:* Showing that it argues a contentious spirit, and an enemy to the Peace of the Church, to be unwilling to follow Order and Custome in things of this nature. We should always fix here, that we ought not, barely upon account of humane Institutions, to separate one from another, seeing we break with those, who embrace the same Doctrine which we do, clearly taught us in the Word of God, under pretence that they have not the same practice with us in the outward part of Religion.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

The Fourth meanes.

To distinguish between that which the Scripture proposes to us to believe, as Doctrine of Salvation; and that which it delivers to us, as Histories of things which have happened; and that which it reports to us, as predictions of things to come.

FOllowing the distinction made, in the foregoing Chapter, of all the things which are proposed to us in the Holy Scripture: We must first examine what it declares to us, as truths, which the true Believer ought to receive by Faith. These are not all of a like nature; and must also be carefully distinguished,

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to take away likewise all cause of contention among Christians. I believe, therefore, they may all be brought under these three Heads. As first, the Mysteries of Religion, which ought to be believed, for setting the Conscience at rest, and procuring its Salvation. Secondly, the Historical Narrations which the Scripture makes us, of many things that have happened, as well in the Disposition of the Order of the Universe, as in the Government of the Church, under the Old and New Covenant. Thirdly, the predictions there made, as of things which must happen, and whereof we see not yet the accomplishment. This being concluded, we should generally receive as unquestionable truths, whatsoever God has revealed to us in his Word. Wherein there are many things which should not, neither can they give any matter of contention, much

much less of Division. As for Example, the Historical Relations of the Holy Scriptures are such, that all Christians generally receive them, as certain and indubitable; and if there be any diversity of Opinions upon any difficulties of Chronology: That should not cause a separation in the Church; The Opinions may be left to the Liberty of particular Persons, to follow therein, what they shall judge most probable. I say the same of interpretations, which may be given to some obscure passages, which should not cause any Division, be the diversity never so great, which is there met with. There is but one sole occasion for allowing it, and that is, when a particular interpretation overthrowes some one of the Fundamental Doctrines, or that they would make it to pass, as issued out from the very mouth of God himself. For all these

interpretations are but so many attempts of Man's wit, which may fail. Insomuch that we should leave to every one the liberty of examining them, to receive them afterwards, or to reject them without prejudice to Salvation, and without breaking the Union, which is had with those of contrary Opinions.

As to what concerns future predictions, neither ought these to be the subject of any Division. It may suffice, we are all in general perswaded, that whatsoever has been foretold, in the Holy Scriptures, shall have its accomplishment, notwithstanding all the obstacles which interfere. 'Tis sufficient to believe, that the first Cause absolutely disposing of second causes. will bring about its designs, in despite of all resistance of the Creatures. This hinders not from advancing our thoughts higher, searching into the sense

ſenſe of the prophecie, and making our conjectures of the times of its execution. We ſhould in this give Liberty to certain particular perſons, eſpecially when theſe kinds of Meditations may contribute to the Conſolation of true Believers, and to excite them more to ſanctity. It is in this, I make that happineſs conſiſt, which the Book of the Apocalypſe attributes to thoſe who read it carefully, and underſtand it. But he who would apply himſelf to this ſtudy, muſt not do it, but with great precautions. Here it is, that much ſtrictneſs muſt be obſerved, and principally not the leaſt ſtirring be made but from a principle of deep humility. He muſt on all occaſions diſtruſt himſelf, but more in this, than any other. For although theſe Oracles be not conceived in ambiguous termes, as thoſe of the *Pagans* were; yet are they propoſed in ob-

ſcure and dark expreſſions; They are ſuch hidden myſteries, and ſo profound, that they can ſcarcely be ſadomed. When predictions are accompliſhed, they change their nature, and become Hiſtories eaſy to be underſtood: But before the Event, they muſt be looked upon with that profound reſpect, as cauſes naturally a ſilence. But yet if any think they have eſpy'd ſome light, they may utter their thought with modeſty; And ſhould rather propoſe it as a conjecture, than as a certain Doctrine. For truly there is nothing ſo dangerous, nor ſo prejudicial to the peace of the Church, as the deſire of making paſs our ſence upon things foretold, for conſtant truths. There needs but a forc'd Opinion of theſe Prophecies, to ſtir up a whole Nation to tumult, to diſturb the peace of States, and ruine the Unity which ſhould be amongſt

mongst Christians. The Examples of this, are as well known, as they are Dreadful to Consider. There might some kind of Parallel be made between this Reflection, and those dangerous obstinate Opinions, whereof we have already made mention, and which must be entirely cast away, to attain to a perfect intelligence in Christianity.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

Fifth Advice.

Touching the Mysteries of Christian Religion, which we must believe, as being Revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and concerning the distinction which must be made of them.

AFter having considered methodically, of what the Word of God teaches us, touching the Rites, Ceremonies, and outward Order of the Church, as also the Histories and Prophesies which it contains; After having shown that in all these things there should be no matter of Contention among Christians: I have nothing less to examine, but what concerns the Rules, com-

comprehending the Holy Mysteries of Christianity, which Believers should own, and receive for their Salvation. And because it is a most important matter, it must be clearly open'd, and explained, to remove whatsoever might give any occasion of Contention, and procure herein, as well as in the rest, a Reconciliation of all Christian Societies.

I cannot now absolutely disapprove the Distinction, which all Doctors make in this matter, and of which I have already spoken. If I acknowledge there be in Religion some important Precepts, essential, fundamental, and necessary to Salvation; I acknowledg therein also others less important, which might be let alone, as where some Errour may slip in; Yet this may be done without prejudicing our Salvation, the Peace of Consciences, and tranquility of the Church. But what

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I cannot approve of in this, is the Application which these Doctors make of this distinction, to their Cause. They commonly fall, concerning this matter, into the same faults which have been observed; Namely their prejudicate Opinions, and particular Interests, which for the most part bear sway in the Judgment, which they make of what is Fundamental, and what is not. So that they would oblige all, who enter into their Communion, to acquiesce in Humane Doctrines, as if they were so many Fundamental Points. They oblige Men also to Reject the Doctrines which agree not with theirs, as if they tended to overthrow the Foundations of Religion, although they may not be so prejudicial, as they would make them believe. For who has Authority of fixing that which is Fundamental, and distinguishing it from that

that which is not? If it were left to the disposition of Men, every Society would do therein according to their prejudicate Opinions, which they have been possessed with, formerly admitted. Whence is it therefore that we should take the Foundation of this distinction, but from the Mouth of God Himself, speaking to Us in his Holy Word?

True it is, we find not any passage in the Holy Scriptures, that declares in formal termes, which are the Fundamental Doctrines, to distinguish them from others. But the nature of the thing tells us, we may establish this distinction, by the very Word of God. For if all Christians receive, as unquestionable truths, all that which has been revealed to Us in the Word of God: If they all acknowledg that it would be an unpardonable crime, but to call in doubt any of these Sacred

Oracles:

Oracles: (seeing it would be to suspect Him of falshood, who is truth it self.) They must by consequence own, that whatsoever is clearly proposed to Us in the Word of God, and is also received by a general consent, is a Fundamental Point of Christianity. They must acquiesce in this Doctrine, as being immediately issued out from God, or else utterly renounce Christianity. Whereas if there be Doctrines which have not been so clearly revealed to Us, they give occasion to the Doctors, to interpose their Judgment, and give place to different Sences. We have likewise the liberty of examining these divers Opinions. We may compare them together, to retain that which we shall judg most conformable to the Analogy of Faith. We may search out that which shall agree best with the Fundamental Points, which gives most consolation

solation to the Soul, and affords the greatest Motives to Piety. But we must not put these last truths in the same rank with the first, nor must we oblige Christians to acquiesce there, in the same degree of Faith. As to the first, we should receive them as so many Oracles delivered from the Mouth of God, without any mixture of humane infirmity; whereas the second, which have passed through the Discourses of Men, may have been altered by the weakness of their Judgment. They may be tainted with the defects and imperfections of humane wit. And these are those truths or rather those Doctrines, which I do not allow to be Fundamental. Otherwise we should give to Man, and to Reason, an Authority, which appertains to none, but to God alone, and his Word. And to the end we may clear this matter by Examples which may make it both known and under-

understood by every one; It is certain that these are Fundamental Doctrines in Christianity; Viz. *That there is One God:* That he hath sent his only Son into the World, *That whosoever believes in Him may have Eternal Life.* That *Jesus Christ* dyed for our Sins, and arose again for our Justification. That He shall come in his Glory, *to judg both the quick and the dead,* and such other truths, as all Christians admit of, as being most distinctly and plainly taught us in the Holy Scriptures. But as for those Doctrines, which determine the Order of the Eternal Decrees of God; that tell us punctually what is the Object of Predestination; that Expound how the two Natures are united, in the Person of *Jesus Christ*; that comprehend and sadome the Mystery of the Trinity; that pretend to discover the means, by which the *Holy Ghost* operates in the hearts of the

the Faithful, and other things of the like Nature. I maintain that although the Learned Men ſhould ſay never ſo many excellent things concerning theſe matters, and what they ſay might be approved, (as being judged reaſonable.) They muſt not nevertheleſs be made to paſs, as of equal authority with the truths which are clearly revealed to us in God's Word. They ought indeed to be received but in ſuch manner, as that we ſhould be all ready to quit, and renounce them, in caſe any one ſhould make us ſee ſome error therein; Otherwiſe it is but to make way for Diviſion: Since every Doctor will make his particular Opinions to paſs for ſo many Fundamental Truths: And will reject all others, as Errors which utterly overthrow Salvation. The adverſe Parties will not be leſs Zealous in maintaining their contrary Opinions,

which will be followed by a lamentable separation and division. Here it is that we should value the Precept of Saint *Paul*; 1 *Thes.* 5. *Prove all things, and hold fast that which is Good.* Here it is also, that the saying of the same Apostle might take place; 1 *Cor.* 3. *That there is but one sole Foundation of Christian Religion, which is Jesus Christ: That Man might build upon it Gold, Silver, precious Stones, Wood, Hay, or Stubble: But that every Man's work shall be made manifest; For it shall be tryed by Fire: which will consume the evil works, although the workers may be preserved.* Let us in the next place, hear what the excellent Author of that Treatise of the Imitation of Christ, says. *What will it avail thee, though thou canst dispute concerning the depth of the Mystery of the Trinity; if, in the mean time, thou shalt be destitute of the Grace of Humility, which may make*

Thee

Thee acceptable to the Trinity? The profound Discourses of Divines, make not a Man more Holy, and more Just. I had rather feel the true effects of repentance, than know how to give a diffinition of it.

This distinction being setled, the ready way will be open to us, by which we may attain to a perfect Reunion of all Christians, in one Confession of Faith. In the first place, I suppose that we must have a strong Faith, having suppressed all particular Interests, which have no regard, but to temporal things; That we must for some time have cast away all those prejudicate Opinions, which are so many bars and hinderances of agreement; After this, I require that we should adhere without varying, to the certain and infallible Rule, which is the Voice of God, speaking to us in his Word: That according to this Word, we

bear one with the other in the divers practice of its Ecclesiastical Discipline, and in the different use of its Ceremonies. That we should not look upon these outward things, but as accidentals to Religion, and which ought not to be established, but according to the general Rule of Order and Decency. I next require, that we all rest in the Truth of the Sacred Histories, leaving a Liberty to learned Men, of declaring their Opinions upon the difficulties, which are therein met with, to follow without constraint, that Party which shall be judged most reasonable; That we read not the Prophesies and Predictions contained in the Holy Scriptures, but with Humility, without determining any thing, as by authority, upon their sence, and the times of their accomplishment; That we carefully distinguish between the Doctrines, so clearly established in the

the Word of God, that all Christians are obliged to receive them: And those which have need, for their enlightning, of the Labour, and Meditation of Men, to clear them; That we admit not of any other, than the first for Fundamentals, and unvariable: And that as to the others, we may dispence with our receiving them, without prejudice to our Salvation, which ought not to depend, but on the first; Or, if we do receive them, it should be but as humane Opinions, which we judg most probable, which nevertheless we are ready to forsake, so soon as we shall know them not to be well grounded. *Lastly*, I undertake that all this may be done, without disturbing the Peace and Unity, which we should entertain with those, who have different Opinions upon these Questions, on condition that they receive them not, but after the same

manner which we receive ours; That is to say, as Humane Doctrines which may have their use, but which should not engage Us, as those which are issued from God, without any mixture of Humane Infirmity. After that, I believe there is no body, who does not judg that, being so well established, all Christians generally shall live in a Perfect Unity, which is the Mark whereto we should all aime.

And to justifie that, what I here lay down, is not without Foundation; that we may attain to Salvation in Christianity, without engageing in the Labyrinth of all these knotty Questions of the Schooles. Suppose it should so happen, that some Christian might be driven by a Tempest into the Country, about the Straights of *Magellan*, or any other Parts, where the Inhabitants never heard speak of our Mysteries.

Farther,

Farther, I would not have this Christian know any but the first, and most plain Rudiments of Christian Religion, contained in his *CREED*. I suppose him only to be perswaded of these truths: That there is One God, who hath created the Heaven and the Earth; That he requires of us Perfect Holiness; That we have violated his Ordinances, which has rendred us unworthy of his mercies; That nevertheless he has invited us still to Repentance, and to Salvation; That He has sent for this Purpose Him, whom He Himself calls His Son; That this Son dyed for our Sins; That He is risen again for our Justification; That He ascended into Heaven, and there makes Intercession for Us; And that if so be we are but fully perswaded of these truths, and will carefully study Piety towards God, and Charity towards our Neighbours, we shall ob-

tain Eternal Happiness. I suppose, that this Man teaches these things to this savage Nation, and that these People, who hitherto had been ignorant of all these truths, are taken with their beauty, and afterwards fully convinced of them, and will thereto conform their Lives: I ask if these People might not truly be called Christians, and whether or no they were not in the ready way to Salvation. For my part, I cannot make any difficulty to believe it, and passing further on, I shall say, that I should esteem them happier, if they continued in these Principles, than if we should come to overcharge them with all these critical Questions, with which we are ordinarily entertained. *John Moquet*, in the Third Book of his Travels, relates a History, which confirms this truth. A poor Christian Woman being a Slave in one of the Principal

Families

Families of *Morocco*, taught the Christian Religion to the Master of the House's Daughters; The Slave, without doubt, was not able to give Her any, but the most General Principles, according to the capacity of a Person of that Sex, and of that condition; Nevertheless this Noble Maid, new-born to the Faith, was so throughly convinced of these Christian truths, that she quickly suffered Martyrdome for the defence of them, and that too with an Heroique Virtue. Therefore as I acknowledge but one sole way, which God offers to all Men, for their attaining Salvation: So I conclude, that all those who shall hold fast to these Principles, so plain, and so few in Number, and live agreeably to them, will undoubtedly obtain Salvation and Life.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

What Ways must be followed, to facilitate the Execution of this Design.

AS it is not enough for the Curing a Disease, to be informed of the Remedy, which is proper for it; but we must also know its use, to apply it to purpose, and with success: So it is not sufficient that we know what will be a saving means to Reunite all Christians in one Confession of Faith: But we must examine how this means must be applyed to produce its effect; seeing great difficulties and obstacles may be found in the practice, which thwart the Execution thereof. There might be alledged the remoteness of many, who are called by the Name of

of Christians, whom it would be almost impossible to bring together, for concurring to so happy a Work. There might be produc'd the great Diversity of Opinions, which are amongst them; The Interests of Princes and States; The engagements of whole Nations; The aversions and animosities, which are strengthened by time. There might be also added the temporal advantages, which those who have any Ecclesiastical charges will be hardly perswaded to part with, and as many other things, which may arise in the spirit of every one. All these considerations might make this Proposition pass for an Aiery and Imaginary project: At the best it might be said to be a fair Idea, but very difficult to put in execution, which, like *Plato*'s Republique, is in the rank of things, which are more to be desired than hoped for.

To

To which I may, in the first place, say, that if there should be no other end proposed herein, than this, of Labouring for the Glory of God, and the Peace of his Church, it might be hoped that he would second with his Grace, so laudable a Design. It is to attend his Work, it is to establish his Raign in the World, it is to build up his House. What? will he refuse the succours of his Grace, to those who shall have no other aim, but his proper Interests? Therefore when we shall meet with difficulties, which we cannot remedy upon the suddain, we should not for that be discouraged, but expect from the Goodness of God, the success of so pious an enterprize. It must not be thought strange, if at present, God has left Christians as destitute of the Graces, which he showered down in the first times of Christianity. His Spirit is not to be found among

Tempests,

Tempests, and amidst Whirlwinds: How? should it be among Christians, divided into so many Sects, and animated with the Spirit of Division, which raigns by passion and violence? So soon as Charity is awakened, we shall then labour for the common Peace: That Spirit which was communicated to the first Disciples, who were met together with one accord, in one place, will inspire us in such manner, that this great design will go forwards beyond all our hopes.

In the mean time, seeing that God does not forbid us the endeavouring to make his Glory shine, with this small stock of Prudence, which we have received from his Grace. I suppose we might happily proceed after this order in our design. It would be necessary, with all speed to cause to be dispersed, Writings of this Tenor, in divers Languages, and send them into all Places, where there shall

ſhall be any Chriſtians; of what profeſſion ſoever they be. This would ſerve to undeceive an infinite number of prepoſſeſſed Spirits, and make them hope for the ſucceſs of an enterprize, which hitherto has been ſuppoſed impoſſible to finiſh. This would waken in divers places, many private Perſons, who would have an inclination to peace, and on whom God had powred his Grace, proper for contributing to ſo good an end. I am aſſured that they would be raviſhed to have ſo favourable an occaſion of working for the common good of Chriſtendom. They would certainly be aſtoniſhed at the conſideration, that they ſhould have been ſo long time without making a diſcovery of this buſineſs, and without taking it by its true Meaſures. They would bleſs God for having opened ſo fair a Port, to enter into ſo great a Calm, after ſo many Tempeſts.

They

They would ſutably qualify themſelves, for the attaining to ſo deſirable an end. They would labour with all their induſtry, to bring thither thoſe of their Communion; and altogether would ſtrive to ſuſpend for a while their Judgments in particular Articles, until by common conſent all that ſhould be regulated, which was requiſite to ſo happy a deſign.

Beſides the writings which ſhould be employed to this end; Familiar converſations, and particular Diſcourſes would much contribute thereunto. It is thus that we might do; and that we ought mutually to lend our aſſiſtance, for the clearing of theſe matters. We ought always to have in Proſpect, the Glory of God, and the Peace of his Church; and this ſhould be our principal buſineſs. There is not any thing, which oftner puts a ſtop to the execution

cution of our greateſt deſigns, than the want of frequent unmasking, and laying them open. For the well-ordering of them, this muſt be often attempted, and all the difficulties by little and little removed, which ſhall occur therein. We are all generally more curious, to entertain our ſelves in converſe about any other thing, rather than that which is moſt neceſſary. The ſubjects moſt ordinarily fallen upon, in thoſe companies which are eſteemed to be the moſt regular, are full of vanity, if not ſinfull. Newes of what paſſes in the World; Affairs of State; Explication of ſome difficult paſſage of the ancient Authors; Some queſtions of the Mathematicks, or of Phyſicks, and things of this nature, are the ordinary entertainment of theſe famous companies, which we ſo much admire. If any one ſhould propoſe ſuch a ſubject as this, which I treat of,

of, either it is coldly received, or passed over lightly, to go to some other, which may give more pleasant relish to the company, and better accomodated to the humours of the Age. And yet what more worthy subject is there of our conversations, than that which regards the general good of all Christians? Let us bless the happy moment, wherein we have been brought to the discovery of this generous design, and contribute our endeavour towards its good success; if we can let our selves be vanquished by this Exhortation!

Moreover it would be convenient, that all those who have found themselves perswaded of the truth and advantage of this Proposition, should employ their greatest care in advancing the execution of it. If in traffick, Men expose themselves to so many perils, to transport their com-

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Moreover it would be convenient, that all those who have found themselves perswaded of the truth and advantage of this Proposition, should employ their greatest care in advancing the execution of it. If in traffick, Men expose themselves to so many perils, to transport their com-

modities from one Country to another, in hopes of ſome ſmall profit; Shall we ſit ſtill without communicating the moſt precious Treaſure, and greateſt advantage which can arrive to Society? It is not here to be feared, that the number of thoſe who ſhall be ſharers in this good, will diminiſh the Portion of any particular Perſon: On the contrary, the increaſe of this number, will augment the Satisfaction and Joy of thoſe, who make a part thereof: As thoſe that follow Armes, rejoyce to ſee their ſide grow ſtronger, and at the ſame time conceive thereat both Hopes and Joy. For, if we act in this Affair, but for the glory of God, the good of his Church, and our own Salvation, as we have even now aſſerted; the more true Believers we ſee Reunited together, to promote this end, the more Joy ſhall we have and the more ſatisfaction.

But

But if private Persons are obliged to contribute to so glorious an enterprize: I believe that those who have any employment in the Church, in whatsoever Society it be, ought to be assistant therein, by a particular engagement. Their profession calls them to it, their charge obliges them to it, and the Lights which they pretend to have above the Vulgar, ought only to guide them this way. They are as well responsible for the Souls of others, as for their own. They should not propose any other Interests, than those which are joyned to the Interests of their Master; and his glory only ought to adorn theirs. If they use it otherwise, they are bad Servants, and Stewards of the Talents, which have been committed to them. But if they once strive with Zeal, to promote this great Work, besides their own comfort, the success of it will make them rea-

dier, and more assur'd. People have commonly their Eyes on them, to follow their steps, and imitate their Examples; So that they draw after them, whole Troopes, Societies, Communities, and Sects, as it suffices Him to gain the Officers of an Army, who would make Himself Master of all the Souldiers.

But especially, I make account, that those who are able to give the greatest stroke on this occasion, are Princes, and all those who have the Government of States, and management of Publique Affairs. They can maintain with their Authority all these Reasons, which shall be employed in this noble enterprize: And their power will be very efficacious, for making the Exhortations of others valued. It is not, that I mean this Affair should be plainly carried on by the force and authority of Men. The understanding must herein

herein be cleared, to gain over the Heart and the Affections, which is better done by reasoning, than threatnings, and by the force of Arguments, than by that of Armes. But since there may be some particular Persons, so wedded to their old Opinions, that for their Worldly Interests, they would reject the good, which would be procured for them; It would be fit to hinder these People, by a Superiour Authority, from crossing so happy a Design. If for Example, some Clergy-men, of any Community whatsoever, could not resolve to quit their temporal advantages, which are of more weight with them, than the Publique Interest: The authority of Princes, and Magistrates, would serve very well to reduce them to that which was Reason and Justice. There would also herein be this advantage expected, from those who have the po-

wer in their Hands; namely, that by the Correſpondence and Alliance, which they have together, they might make this good, Univerſal to all Chriſtians. They might likewiſe Joyn their Forces, for repreſſing the boldneſs of Infidels, and all Enemies to the Name of Chriſtians, who would oppoſe themſelves to ſo holy a Reſoluſtion. Laſtly, they might maintain againſt all others, thoſe who would enter into this Holy Communion; But forasmuch as this is one of the moſt powerful means, to attain to this end, and which deſerves more important conſiderations; I reſerve it to a particular Treatiſe, if this firſt Work ſtill be favourably entertain'd.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

Answers to the Objections, and Difficulties which may be formed against this Design.

THere can be no advantage proposed, which meets not with its Difficulties; We cannot fetch Gold out of a Mine, but with much trouble; The Earth is not made fertile, but when it is digged and plowed with great care: and the success of the most admirable enterprizes is not obtained, but by surmounting with industry, all the obstacles which are met with, in the execution of them. And yet this trouble we have in attaining these most excellent goods, is that which contributes much to their glory. It is a poor

common Vertue which findes no resistance in its operations; The praise of Heroick Virtue consists in the conquering of great difficulties. So that this project would be less admirable than it is, if it could be effected without pain, and if the execution thereof were easy. But what objections may be made to this, and difficulties met with herein; will be altogether such, as that we shall be easily able to Answer the One, and Remedy the other.

Some will presently say, That to attempt this, is, in a manner to go about to hinder an effect, which must necessarily happen. That it is, as if one should undertake to stop the course of the Stars, and hinder the Revolution of the Seasons. That *Jesus Christ* and his Apostles have foretold there should be Heresies, Dissentions, and Schismes in the Christian Church. That this is per-

permitted by the Providence of God, to make evident the Zeal and Constancy of his Faithful Servants: Insomuch that it would be to strive against the Eternal Decrees, and Rules appointed in the Counsel of God, to endeavour to prevent the division or dissention among Christians. But for satisfying this Objection, besides what has been said upon this Point, at the beginning of this Treatise. There is but one thing to consider, which is, that this Prediction is not only grounded upon a Decree of God, for the ordering of things which should happen in his Church; but upon an effect of the evil disposition of the Spirits of Men, which is cause of the Disunion. And that hinders Us not from labouring to remedy this cause, and put a stop to these deplorable effects. So that what *Jesus Christ* has foretold us of the Fire which he

was

was come to kindle in the Earth, by the Preaching of his Gospel, hinders not his Servants from running, with great affection, to extinguish it, and to stay the great burning which this Flame might cause; Moreover, if it were so, that this Evil falls out, because it has been foretold: Yet it does not impore thus much, that it should abide continually. Is it not enough, that it has taken place for so many Ages? Is it not time to stop its Course, and see an end of it? So will the Prophesie have had its accomplishment in our Fathers days, and we shall, in ours, enjoy the calm, after all these Tempests. Let us add hereunto, that this very word, which foretells us these Divisions, makes us also hope for an estate of Peace, and Quiet in the Church. It makes times of refreshment, and ease, to succeed all these great disturbances; and assures us that there shall be such a

firm

firm Peace in the Earth, that we shall see those Creatures, which are the greatest Enemies one to the other, that is to say, those Spirits wherein is the most contrariety, dwell, and unite together. Who knows, but that we may live to enjoy those happy times? Who knows, but that in our days, we may see this general Peace among all Christians? And I durst promise, that by the assistance and bounty of God, This shall come to pass, if our Sins do not put a hinderance to it, and our particular Interests more sway us, than the general good of Christendom.

It must be said in the second place that this Design of bringing all Christians to acknowledg, but so small a Number of Heads in Christian Religion, approved by every one, is directly opposite to the Apostles Doctrine, and to the Practice of the Primitive Christians. Those, who dispute

dispute so strongly against the Errours which arose in their times; Those who condemned with so much indignation, all who did not conform to the Holy Doctrine, which they received from the Lord; Is there any likelihood that they would have hearkened to these Propositions of bearing with one another, and a charitable condescending in these Points of Religion? Would St. *Paul* have listened to such an accommodation, who writ with so much sharpness against the *Galatians*, who had suffered themselves to be seduced by certain false Teachers: Would St. *John*, who refused to have any converse with Heretiques, have approved of this Overture? To which I answer, that what perswaded these Holy Men, to act on this manner, was, that they regarded not so much the diversity of Opinions, which they disapproved, as the evil disposition of

of those, who went about to establish those ill Opinions. They well saw that what these Persons were about to contrive, was not out of a spirit of simplicity, and humility: They observ'd nothing in all their conduct, but particular Interests of Worldly honour, profit, authority, and rule, which all their endeavours carried them to. These now are Motives, against which we can never make too much Zeal and Indignation appear. But we see, they dealt clearly otherwise with such poor People, as had been seduced by these crafty Wits, than they did with these Incendiaries, these spirits of Lying. They *treated* those with mildness, but these they condemned with severity: They bare with the first, and had charity for them, but they had a Holy, and Just anger for the second: They allowed some Liberty to the former, but granted nothing to the Latter.

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We see also how St. *Paul*, that Zealous Servant of God, is not afraid in the very question of the Resurrection of our Bodies, (so important in Religion,) of setting a great value on this holy and charitable bearing with one another. To this might be added that these Holy Men have been immediately inspired by the spirit of God, to acknowledg, and make known to others these Heavenly truths. And this being so, they might condemn with boldness, and with knowledg of the Cause, those who rejected the truth, which appeared to them in the open Day; Whereas at present, we not having these Lights, and this Supernatural and Miraculous Assistance, are obliged to keep our selves strictly to the express termes of the Doctrine contained in the Holy Scriptures.

Moreover, it might be Objected, that this Design is of dangerous consequence;

ſequence: That it is to give to every one a liberty of having what Opinion he pleaſes; and alſo in matters of importance, ſuch as have hitherto divided Mens ſpirits; That it is to give an occaſion of falling inſenſibly into an indifferency for Religion, and to favour, in ſome ſort, the contempt of all. Now, as this is a preſſing Objection, and able to drive from this deſign all good Souls, if it were well founded; I am confident that whoſoever ſhall have well examined the Foundations which I have laid down, will find that there is nothing further from my purpoſe, than this conſequence, which they would draw from it. This would be to make darkneſs ariſe from light, and as the Scripture ſays, to draw filthineſs from that which is pure, to imagine ſuch effects ſhould proceed from a cauſe ſo holy and innocent. Can that which only tends to

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the Re-uniting of Christians in the same Opinions, hurry them into impiety, and irreligion? Will that which brings Us back to the most plain, and most naked Doctrine of the Gospel, cause an indifferency for Religion to spring from it? What then would this be, living without Religion, to be fully perswaded, that there is a God, who hath created Heaven and Earth, who hath made Man kind, who punisheth the wicked, and cherisheth the Good? Is it to be without Religion, to believe firmly that we have no other means of getting out of that misery, wherein our Sins have cast Us, but by embracing the promises which God has made Us, in his Son *Jesus Christ*? Is it to be indifferent in matters of Religion, to hold for certain, that there is no way to obtain Life and Eternal Happiness, but by that of Holiness, and good Works? Is it to be impious,

impious, wholly to consecrate our selves to the service of God, according to the Rules which he hath prescribed Us in his Word, under the colour, that there are but few Rules embraced; Yet however embraced, with an entire perswasion of their truth? I maintain, on the contrary, that all these defects of Piety, and all these inclinations to irreligion, do not proceed from any other cause, than this, that Religion has been overcharged with too many curious and strange Questions. I hold that it is this great number of Ceremonies, scrupulous Observations of the externals of Religion, and such other trifles, which have divided the minds of Men, and alienated the most tender affections. For those who are not penetrating enough to search into, and resolve all the difficulties which are met with in these kind of matters, suffer themselves to fall in-

to an indifferency. They never looked upon Religion, but as a Subject whereon the most subtil, and active Wits set themselves awork. Whereas, if we did but once reduce Christian Religion, to the natural simplicity of its Rules, it would then discover all its graces and beauty, and would be lov'd by us all, because it would have nothing in it, but what was lovely to our Eye.

Lastly, There might be produced other difficulties, which might occur in the prosecution of this grand design. Some will say, that if it were a feasible thing, it would have long ago come into the heads of some others, who would have tryed it; And if they did discover it, without making some attempt in it, it was because they knew the execution of it to be impossible. That there are too many different Geniouses to overcome, too many different Interests

ests to reconcile, too many Jealousies and distrusts to surmount: That after we shall have begun to remedy the precedent evils, there will arise from this design other new subjects of contention and dispute, and by consequence of Division. But perchance no body to this present has ever considered this affair, as I do: It may be, if they have made the same discovery, they have wanted application of spirit to form the design of it, and clear the difficulties. For my part, I do not think the difficulties unconquerable: And I say once more, that would we *engage* in it with Zeal, and Religious motives, the affair would succeed happily, to the great good of all Christendome. These spirits would let themselves be vanquished by the motions of Pity, and Charity. All these particular Interests would give place to that, of the Glory of our Soveraign.

All these Jealousies, and Distrusts would be smothered by an ardent Zeal, for the Service of God. And why shall I loose the hopes of succeeding in this generous Design? Did we not see, that at the Disputation at *Poissy*, in the Year 1561. The *Roman* Catholicks and Protestants had almost agreed together about the termes, wherein the Article of the Communion should be expressed? Yet that is esteemed the greatest difference amongst them. And had it not been for certain Doctors, who indeed, for their particular Interests, broke off this accommodation, it would then have been seen, that these two Grand Parties would have been reconciled together. Do we not know that at the Conference held at *Marporg* in *Germany*, in the Year 1529. between *Luther* and *Zuinglius*, they fell into agreement about certain expressions, almost in

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all the Points of Religion, and it was concluded, that as to those whereon they could not likewise agree, they should bear charitably one with another, and that that should not hinder the Reunion which was to be made. I know that afterwards it was crossed, by the ill disposition of bad spirits. But, when all these particular Interests, and prejudicate Opinions, shall be removed, which have at other times crossed all these fair designs, what shall hinder us from meeting in that Point, and true Center, now at last, wherein all Christians may be Reunited? Who shall hinder us in those things, wherein it may be, we cannot easily be enlightened, from using a charitable, and brotherly bearing with one another? And that so we may work together, as well United Brethren, for the Glory of the Common Father of this great Christian Family, whose

Head, the Lord *Jesus Christ*, cannot be divided? The greatest rub is in the first steps, which must be made towards this Reunion, but this is no unconquerable difficulty.

We read in the Relations of Voyages, made to the Eastern Countrys, that in *Turky*, *Persia*, *&c.* All the Christians which are there met with, of whatsoever Sect they be, live together in a perfect Unity, and give mutually all possible marks of a sincere friendship.

Olearius observes, that in *Persia* they make no difficulty of joyning together in their Devotions. And *Peter de la Valle*, a *Roman* Gentleman, relates, (*Tom.* 2. *Ep.* 3.) that when an *English* Ambassadour arrived at *Hispahan*, a Consultation was held, whether or no the *Roman* Catholicks, the *Spaniards*, and *Italians*, which were there, should go to Visit Him, and that by joynt consent they

they were of Opinion, that it was the common Interest, to make it appear to that *Mahometan* Prince, notwithstanding some difference that there was amongst them in certain Points of Religion, yet that they lived together in a perfect correspondence. And he adds a very considerable Instance, *Viz.* That in *Constantinople*, all the Christians, both Catholiques and Heretiques (as his phrase is) dwell together in so excellent and perfect an Unity, that once when he lived there, I know not upon what occasion, the Jesuits having fallen into some great trouble; The Ambassadours of *England* and *Holland*, who otherwise are their mortal Enemies, (as he says) were the first, who spake in their favour, and made their business be dispatched, with all the good success which they could desire. What hinders Us here in *Europe*, in the middest of Christia-

nity, that we cannot do that, by a motive of Charity, which they in the *Levant* do by the Principle of the Interest of Trade, and civil Affairs, and that, we drawing again one towards another, should not agree at last in the Fundamental Points, which may Unite Us altogether? And although this Design should not be so readily brought to perfection; Meditation would be very advantagious, and very conducing to it. Particular Persons, who shall have tasted of it, would draw much satisfaction from it; They would be disabused, as to many of their preconceived Opinions; They would finde themselves discharged of a heavy Yoke; They would unmask Christian Religion, and discover its beauteousest Face, as being most pure, and most plain. They would love it, and dwell together in its profession, with singular comfort. I shall

shall also add this same, that if the Proposition should not succeed so happily, for all Christians in general, it might take effect in many particular States of Europe. I mean amongst those Christians, where there are diversities of Opinions and Professions. Could we not, at least in these places labour herein, for some good accommodation? And would not the Fruit which grows thence, be capable of inviting others to take a share in it?

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The Conclusion.

The Profits and Advantages, which might be hoped for from this Design.

HE must be very dim-sighted, who cannot plainly see the signal advantages, which may be expected from so excellent a Design. It would be an admirable means for advancing the Glory of God, to establish his Doctrine, in the purity and simplicity which is natural to it. Men have been desirous to supply by their prudence, the defects which they thought they had observed, in the conduct of providence. They thought that God had not in His Word explained Himself, neither clear enough, nor amply enough, to be

be understood, without assistance. Thence proceeded all these expositions, Paraphrases, Commentaries, Questions and Disputes, which have oppreſt, & almost choaked the most excellent, and most holy Doctrine, that ever appeared in the World. If therefore we can but once rid her of this Burthen, she will appear in all her luster again, and establish in its ancient purity the service of Him, who is manifested by Her. Under the old Covenant, God rejected the Worship, which the most superstitious amongst the *Jews* offered him; and that because they had modell'd it according to their fancies, and had rather endeavoured the observance of these outward things, than the solidity and essence of true Piety. God refuses his Graces to those, who have no mind to receive them, meerly simple and pure as they are: To mix them with ours, is absolutely

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to ſpoil them. And now ſeeing we are ſo unhappy at this preſent, as not to enjoy the communication of the Graces of Heaven, nor that bleſſed commerce which the firſt Chriſtians had with God, who doubts but that this muſt needs come from hence, that we have quitted their ſimple and innocent carriage in Divine Service? We have undertaken to ſerve Him after our manner, and we have endeavoured to know Him, only by ſuch Ideas, which our Caprichious fancies have faſhion'd of Him; This has properly been the cloud, which has intercepted our ſight of Him; This, certainly, has been the Sin, which being the moſt capital of all, has made Him conceal Himſelf from us, and the provocation which has obliged his Juſtice to chaſtize, by the deprivement of his Graces, thoſe who have neglected the ſimplicity of his Doctrine. We

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must therefore re-enter into that first estate of simplicity, humility, and charity, to recover that which we have lost, that is to say, God and his Graces: And this is what we should hope for, from the execution of this Design.

The second advantage which we may expect, is, that we should find it much easier to extirpate Vice, and to procure the Reformation of Manners in Society. We are driven to a necessity of certain Disputes, and strange Controversies, whilst we should be rooting out the passions, which choak the Fruit of the Doctrin of the Gospel. We make sallies out upon the Enemy, whilst Sedition molests us within. Let us cast away these unprofitable Questions: We have enough to do, to make Answer to the Reproaches of our own Consciences. We shall never think of reforming our manners, whilst we

spend

ſpend the chieſeſt of our time, in maintaining theſe impertinent Diſcourſes. We ſhall not be able to defend our ſelves from ill examples, if we employ our Armes in vindicating of indifferent Opinions, which cannot ſo long be debated *Pro*, & *Con*, without prejudice to Salvation: Eſpecially ſince this diverſity of Opinions deſtroys, as it hath been proved, both Charity, which is the foundation of Chriſtian vertues, and humility, which is the ſoul of them. The fire of this Diviſion muſt firſt be extinguiſhed, before we can proceed, with ſucceſs, towards the Correction of Manners and Reformation of Life. Therefore it is this, that all good Chriſtian Souls do ſigh after.

We might have great reaſon to hope that the State would have alſo a conſiderable advantage by this deſign. People would become more tractable, and ſubmit with more willingneſs

lingness to the Orders of their Governours, when they should see themselves united with them in the same Profession. It has been lways observed, that mens Affections have never been straightly linked together, where their Minds have been divivided by different Opinions: Moreover all those subtilties, which we cause to arise about Religion, do ordinarily make peoples spirits inquisitive, proud, standing upon punctilio's, obstinate, and by consequence, more difficult to be brought to Reason and their Obedience. Every parcular man pretends to have a right of taking cognisance of those Controversal Matters, to interpose his judgment therein, and then with great vehemency to defend them. After this, in Affairs of State they will take the same liberty, which they gave themselves in those of Religion. They believe, that if it be permitted them to controll

controll the Opinions of their Governours in the Church, where the Service of God is; it should likewise be free for them to examine the Conduct of those who are set over them in State. Thus the Reunion which I propose, will be apowerful means to hold every one in his Duty.

All Princes of Christendom would draw considerable advantages from this design, besides the Obedience of their Subjects, of which I have now been speaking. They might strictly unite themselves together; For these Jealousies, these Distrusts and these Divisions, which ordinaiily arise from diversity of Professions, coming absolutely to cease, all these different Interests, which separate them, would unite in one, and the Fruit would be common to them all. This Interest would carry them on jointly to oppose themselves to the Enemies

Enemies of the Name of Christian, and take over them all advantage, which reason & justice could allow. Is it not a strange thing that since the Roman Catholicks, the Protestants and the Greeks have so rent and torn each other; we see that the Mahometans have made so great a progress amongst them, by reason of their Divisions? If, when the Turks came to fix themselves in *Hungary*, and then afterwards attacqued the State of the Venetians, all Christendom with one accord had opposed themselves to their designs; Had they reaped those advantages, which now they have obtained over those two States? Is it not a very astonishing, not to say a shameful, thing, that some neighbouring Countries to those dreadful Enemies of all Christians, do think themselves obliged to treat with them, and that also upon disadvantagious Terms, meer-

ly out of the Diſtruſts and Jealouſies which they have of other Chriſtians? They ſhamefully make Peace with the Turks, to turn their Arms againſt the Chriſtians; eſteeming it to be running to that which is the moſt preſſing neceſſity: Thus the common Enemy advances, and gets much ground every day, by reaſon of our Diviſions. To ſtop this evil, I ſee no other more effectual remedy, than to haſten this Agreement of Opinions, which (without doubt) will be followed by that of affections.

The *common* People will find herein this ſatisfaction, that they ſhall no more be troubled in Religion, with ſo great a number of Queſtions, and diverſity of Opinions, propoſed to them as neceſſary to Salvation. Hereby will be baniſhed from hence all thoſe Scruples of Conſcience, thoſe Troubles, thoſe

those Alarms and those Distrusts, so directly opposite to the Genius of Christian Religion, and to the Peace which the Eternal Son of God has procured for us. Thus the simple Artificers, the Labourers, and those who are most unlearned and ignorant would be guided in the way of Salvation, and be led to the enjoyment of eternal Blessedness. The Doctors, by this means, would not have any advantage over the people, in the Knowledge and practise of things necessary to Salvation. It might be said, that hitherto there have been, as it were, two different Religions, in one and the same Religion: The first is of the learned and Scholars, the other that of the common People, Women and Children: Yet *Jesus Christ* never had a double Auditory, he never instructed the Pharises and the Doctors of the Law otherwise than the com-

mon People: And when he chose Successors to supply his room, they were poor Fishermen, who had more concern in the instructing and saving of such as were like them in condition, than boasting their subtilty in the Disputes of the Schools, and confounding such as thought to have the advantage over others in arguing.

I am also persuaded, that those particularly, who are employed in Ecclesiastical Charges, and called to teach others, will here find great advantage. They will no more tread upon those Thorns, which heretofore they met with, in all those critical and unprofitable Questions: They will have no more those Distrusts and Alarms, which they gave themselves, doubting if they were not in a wrong way, and if they missed not others: They will not fear the encountring a Doctrine

trine which is truer than that they profess. Let them say what they will, this thought oftentimes makes their hearts ake, who, amongst them, have tender Consciences. Therefore seeing themselves delivered from all those unquietnesses, they would acquit themselves of their Charge with much more Joy. They would labour with pleasure for the Advancement of the Glory of God. They would bend all their thoughts to stir up every one to a good life, and they themselves would be Examples to others, of Vertue, Piety and Charity. 'Tis often seen, that amidst the Contentions which the Doctors raise about some Niceties of Doctrinal Points, there is little or no Zeal for the Glory of God. They grow so passionate for the getting of some advantage in a Dispute, until, at last, they let themselves be mastered

red and vanquiſhed by their own Paſſions. Many times ſtrange Controverſies make us forget that buſineſs that we ſhould have with our ſelves; and ſome ſtudy more how to ſpeak well, and diſpute well, than how to live well.

Laſtly, who does not ſee, that if we bring this deſign about, it will prove an excellent means to draw to the Goſpell many people, who look not upon it now but with averſion and contempt. This Simplicity, this Beauty, and this Facility which is obſerved in Chriſtian Religion, together with the perfect Unity of the Profeſſors thereof, will be a powerful Loadſtone to attract to it, all theſe, who hitherto have rejected it: When they ſhall ſee that this holy Religion is not made to conſiſt meerly in Ceremonies, that is to ſay, in outward grimaces, which

most commonly terrifie and keep off those that are well inclined towards it, rather than invite them to follow it: When they shall never more hear talk of all those critical and troublesome Questions, which are risen up in Christianity: When they shall observe no more particular interests predominant in the Spirit of Christians: When they shall be convinced, that there is nothing but the Love of God, Charity towards our Neighbour, and the desire of living well, which inspires them: Lastly, when they shall see in the Faces of these Christians the marks of true Peace and Comfort, which the Christian possesses within: They must have deprived themselves of all sence of Vertue, they must have extinguished utterly all sparks of Reason, and turn sworn enemies of their own good, if they de-

ſire not to enter into a Society which hath all theſe advantages.

I doubt not alſo but thoſe bleſſed Spirits who continually ſtand before the Throne of God, will be concerned in the Advantages of this holy Union; for if they ſo much intereſt themſelves in the converſion of a poor ſinner, that they rejoyce and ſing aloud in the Quire of Glory, will they not make a ſolemn Feſtival in Heaven for the reuniting of all Chriſtians upon earth? I am alſo perſuaded, that God, ſeeing we all bend our Courſe toward him, with the ſame heart and the ſame affections, will certainly come to meet and receive us; He will embrace us in his mercies, and ſpeak to us in the motions of his loving kindneſs, eſpecially if *we ſay* to him with the Author of that Treatiſe of the Imitation of Chriſt, *Lib.* 1. *C.* 3. *I am*

weary

weary with hearing and reading so many things. It is in thee alone, O my God, that all is included which I desire or wish for. Let all Doctors hold their peace, let all Creatures keep silence in thy presence, and be thou pleased alone to speak to me.

I wish with all my heart, that all these considerations may make such an impression upon the spirits of all those who shall read this Writing, that every one may afterwards contribute, according to his power, to the advancement of this great work; and that God would favour, in such manner, our attempts with his Grace, that we might suddainly see a happy success therein to his Glory, and the good of all Christians. And because my voice is too weak to awaken them, and draw them out of the estate where I behold them now; I wish they would hear that of the great Apostle of the

Gentiles,

Gentiles, whose Voice and Stile all Christians know. He calls to them thus, in *Ephes.* 4. *Be ye kind one to another in love, endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace. There is but one body and one spirit, even as you are called to one hope of your vocation: There is but one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in you all.* This great servant of God likewise beseeches them all, with words capable to work upon the hardest hearts, speaking to the *Philippians*, Chap. 2. *If*, says he, *there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of Love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, if any compassion; make my Joy compleat, that ye be of the same opinion, having the same charity, being of the same courage and acquiescing in the same thing. Neither let any thing be done amongst you with strife,*

strife, or vain glory: But rather esteeming one the other, in humility of spirit, more excellent than himself, not every one regarding his own particular interest, but that also which appertains to others. Let there be therefore one mind in you, like that which was also in Jesus Christ. To whom, with the Father, be Glory for ever and ever. *Amen.*

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